Towards Light

BY

Swami Yogeswarananda

Kindly presented to me by the Revd. Swamiji.

Umasankar Sach

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SWAMI YOGESWARANANDA.

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTT,
ULSOOR, BANGALORE.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

This book contains in its five Chapters five addresses on moral and religious topics. They were delivered by the Author in Bangalore and other places. At the request of some of his students and other persons who listened to them, he publishes them in the form of this volume. If they, in any way, stimulate those who will read them to develop their spiritual nature; in any way, incline their hearts more "towards Light" than before; he will consider his labour greatly rewarded.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTT,
Bangalore, 1912.

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TOWARDS LIGHT

I

DOUBT

Our great master Sri Râmakrishna used to tell a parable. There dwelt in a certain village a wood-cutter who used to hew down trees from the forest close by, and sell them in the market as timber or firewood, and thereby earn his livelihood. From day to day, he felled tree after tree, till, after a time, all the trees but one disappeared under his destructive axe. Pressed by necessity, the woodman came to cut down the last tree, but when he saw it standing solitary in its place, his heart was suddenly filled with anxiety and sorrow. He mused within himself, " What will be my fate when this last tree is felled ? How shall I earn my livelihood and support my wife and children ?" Starvation and all its horrors began to show their dire pictures to his imagination. Sorely tried by anxious thoughts, he sat under the tree and gave himself up to reflection.

While he was wrapped in thought, a sweet voice came to his ears, saying, "My son, why are you so sorrowful ? Rise." The woodman started up, and saw before him a Sâdhu. He expressed before him the cause of his anxiety and sorrow, and asked him if he could give him any advice. The Sâdhu told him, "Be not disheartened ; move onwards," and went away. The sudden appearance of the Sâdhu and his simple advice appeared to the wood-cutter as mysterious. So he took the words of the Sâdhu as a message from God. Following them, he began to move forwards in the direction which came foremost to his mind at the moment. As he marched on, he came, the parable says, to a forest of sandal-wood. At the sight of the forest, his heart was elated with joy, and his faith in the Sâdhu's words was strengthened. He began to sell sandal-wood from the forest, and amassed considerable wealth. After some time, when he had grown rich, one day, he thought within himself, "The great soul, by whose grace, my miseries have ended, told me to "Move onwards," why should I then be satisfied with the sandal-wood forest? Did he mean that here I should stop?" He doubted whether that was the goal towards which the great man wanted him to move. Thus thinking, he began to press onward out of the sandal-wood forest. After going some distance, he found a mine of copper. He worked up the mine with the help of experts and labourers and became enormously rich. The parable says, that he was not satisfied with this also. He doubted whether that was ultimate place meant by the Sâdhu. So he moved onward again, and found, after a short distance, a mine of silver. He grew still richer by working at it. Yet he was not satisfied. Yet he doubted in his heart whether that could be the end of his progress. He then came upon a mine of gold, and afterwards again upon a mine of diamond. The poor wood-cutter thus became the richest man of the country.

Though the parable does not say whether he moved farther or not, yet its moral may be apparent to all—that with our present individual and social conditions, be they considered in their intellectual or moral aspect, we should not be satisfied, but should move onward, ever doubting whether the stage of development we have reached can be the end of our progress.

Movement seems to be one of the chief characteristics of Nature. The Sun is moving round its axis. The earth and the other planets are moving round the Sun like devotees in reverence round their God. The countless twinkling stars and other great and small luminous bodies of heavens are in perpetual motion. By motion, were shaped out of the primordial nebulæ these spheres of light. The various conformations of the earth—the hills that majestically rear their heads, and the low valleys, through which now the streams gurgle by, the wide plains that at present wave with corn or are decked with trees, and the mighty ocean, that has become the abode of multitudinous forms of life, arose, at one time, by motion out of a molten mass. The first speck of life showed itself upon earth by a peculiar movement. It developed through assimilation, reproduction, and other forms of motion. One form of life gradually became many ; the simple changed into the complex. After many and prolonged contests, after many bloody battles among the different animals for life and its pleasures, after the death of millions of creatures, there appeared upon the earth a race of living beings to be its lords. Man, the inflorescence of evolution, did not rest in idleness. To hold his position of superiority upon the globe, he changed his state of isolation for a state of aggregation. Gradually becoming a social being, he has, in many places of this earth, progressed from a state of savageness to a state of comparative civilisation. But it is the unique characteristic of man that he is not only determined by, but determines this universal movement of Nature in whose bosom he lives. He is not a powerless material aggregate floating down the stream of changes, but a living being swimming in it with self-consciousness. He is not merely affected by his surroundings, but he affects them with a strength which is peculiarly his own.

Man lives in this world as the lord of the inanimate and the animate. He towers over them by his superiority. He possesses superior organs both for locomotion and sense-perception—feet that enable him to run swiftly in times of danger or attack, hands that add to his strength by clasping spears, arrows, swords, and other weapons of war, eyes that are naturally fitted to catch the light of most distant objects. These and other organs, powerful by themselves, or aided by instruments and appliances produced by his intelligence, all lift him up above the rest. With his intellectual light, flashing from a highly developed and complicated brain, he achieves wonders, and asserts his mastery over the forces of Nature. But it is not because he has superior eyes, hands, or feet, or cunningness born of a developed brain, that man possesses a real halo of greatness about him. These characters he may possess in a greater degree than the lower animals, yet he has them in common with others. It is not these that raise him high above the herd of animals and make him the true lord of the earth. It is because man alone,

" looks before and after and pines for what is not". It is because he alone, of all other creatures, weighs his by-gone experiences in the scales of his judgment, watches his present state with keenness, and peering through the dim light of the future, attempts at forming some conception of the goal towards which he is moving, and when he has succeeded in doing so, puts forth his best energies for the realisation of his end, that he stands majestic above the rest. The consciousness of the goal of his life and conscious attempts to attain it are the peculiar characteristics of man.

Naturally you may be asking within yourselves, "What is the goal of our life? What is it towards which we should be consciously moving?" If I am to answer your question in one word, I should say, Perfection. I~~f~~ is for the t/ perfection of our nature that we should struggle, that we should spend the forces of our life, and Perfection will give the true signification to our life, and its joys and sorrows.

Let me say here that Perfection means the development of our physical and mental powers in such a way that we may know the Truth, and live in accordance with such knowledge, and thereby, individually and collectively, secure our welfare—welfare considered in all the fulness of its meaning. To know what we really are, to understand the real nature of the universe,—the laws which govern it, and the ultimate principle from which it has its being,—to grasp fully the character of the varied relationship in which we stand towards our fellow-creatures, and to utilise this knowledge by leading a life in accordance with it, is to attain perfection. In other words, when we shall know and fulfil our duties and responsibilities to ourselves, our fellow-creatures, and God, we shall gain the end for which we are here in this world. A great end is Perfection, and all the high intellectual powers are given to man, so that he may approach, if not attain, it as nearly as he can. For what nobler object than the betterment of the individual and the race, can he toil, struggle, and lay himself down to rest for ever in the end ? For what other object working, can he have the satisfaction that he has not acted his part in vain ?—That the powers with which he was gifted, when he came into this world, were not, like costly tools and materials in the hands of a foolish craftsman, wasted and worn out by him. So it is our duty to keep this aim ever in mind in all our labours of life. Like the sight of a light streaming out of a distant dwelling, when one has lost one's way in the dark in a wilderness, the steady vision of this aim will guide our footsteps through many critical conditions of our lives. On many an occasion, when our mind will swing in hesitation between two obscure courses of conduct, when thoughts of " Ought " and " Ought Not " will disturb its equanimity and bring it into painful suspense, reference to this supreme aim will clear its view, and fill it with the gladness of decision and renewed energy.

Though Perfection will be acknowldged by almost all persons to be the aim of life, yet there will probably come expressions of dissent, nay, even contradiction, from most of them, if the attitude and the activity of mind called Doubt be preached as in any way helpful toward its realisation.

From time immemorial, Faith has been extolled by all who have said anything of importance on Religion. The Bhagavad Gita says, "He who has faith, has his heart fixed on the supreme aim, and is self-controlled, attains wisdom" The Bible says:—"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

The power of faith in bringing out the latent forces of mind, in gathering them up, and throwing them in all their strength upon any desired object, has been felt by almost all. Who has not perceived its power, when he has met with any difficulty apparently insurmountable, and got over it by his belief that he has strength to do so? Depressed by dire misfortune, when he has lost wealth, honour, or those who are dearest to him, has not many a poor soul drawn inspiration from faith, that it will be all well again, that after the darkest and the most stormful night, the light and calm of day are sure to appear, and believing has taken heart to renew life's struggles again. The consoling and the energizing character of faith will not be denied by any thoughtful man. And if we turn from the trials and troubles which all men encounter in this world to those peculiar difficulties which an intellectual man—an enquirer after truth—has to face, we find the necessity of faith in his case all the more. When a seeker after truth studies the facts and phenomena of nature relying solely upon observation and inference, when he questions them again and again to reveal their character, when he pushes his enquiry far so as to get at the ultimate facts or principles lying at their basis, often he finds that, all at once, his progress is arrested. No farther can he go; observation and inference can shed no more gleam upon his path ; he stands face to face with a mystery. How came the nebulous universe and its first motion ? What is attraction ? What is life ? And how came it upon the face of the earth in the course of its evolution ? What is man's personality that it asserts itself ever as "I," "I", and drawing all phenomena of consciousness to itself, as to a centre, claims them as its own ? Who can give final and satisfactory answers for these and other questions ? Man builds up hypotheses—imaginary states of things that explain these and other mysteries—and believes them, or putting his faith in an Inscrutable Power behind Nature, bows in reverence and submission before it. The faith that leads an enquirer to build hypotheses and accept them, is quite rational. It is based upon facts, tentative in its character, and is quite ready to undergo change when facts call for it. It is not an obstacle, but a help towards progress. But for it, man will be in the dark, and will not find his way to work in this world. But there is another kind of faith which is based not upon facts, but upon fiction. Deriving its origin from man's imagination, it luxuriates in growth, and then fossilising itself, tries to remain supreme over his heart. It is an eternal enemy of facts, it is a drag-load to prevent progress ; it ever fears to meet the searching eye of enquiry. All superstitions, all obnoxious customs, and all unjust practices sanctified by time, live by it and receives its support. When it comes to dwell in its death-dealing rigidity in any human heart, its victim's vision gets vitiated, his reason grows beclouded, and his will becomes sadly inactive in the right way. He no longer sees the necessity of climbing up the ladder which leads step by step to Perfection.

When this disease of irrational faith paralyses the spirtual life of a man, what is the remedy which can bring him to a healthy state. What is that mental medicine which, when inoculated, can bring back his lost vigour ? It is through doubt and doubt alone that he can regain life, and march onwards in the Path of Progress. " But doubt not for doubt's sake, but for truth's sake."

I am not asking you to cultivate that spirit of universal scepticism which, beginning to sap and explode the superstitions and other evils of life, end with sapping and exploding all that is valuable and lovely in our existence. I am not an advocate of that pernicious spirit which will doubt and do away with moral life, on which the human society rests, and which alone gives sweetness and signification to our sojourn on earth. But that the spirit of honest enquiry, wholesome doubt, and earnest desire to see the Truth, and to destroy everything that hides it from the human gaze, should be cultivated by all, is what I cry for. Truth can never suffer from enquiry. Doubt can never injure it in any way. Truth will ever shine in its majestic beauty while the brushwood of lies is burning round.

Rene des Cartes, a French philosopher, started on his philosophic career, saying that he would doubt all ideas and theories known and prevalent in his days, and accept nothing without examination, though he would not deviate from established morals in his conduct. And Proof Huxley says, Since Des Cartes' days, modern Scientists have adopted Doubt as the guiding principle in their investigations of Nature, which, therefore, have been so fruitful in their results. In fact, long before Des Cartes, all original thinkers, all great reformers of human society, doubted and did not accept the popular notions of their times. If you go back in your mind over the past history of the human race, if you think over the great movements of thought and action associated with the names of immortal heroes of the East and the West—the names of Budha, Nanak, Chaitanya, and Ramanuja, and Socrates, Jesus, St.Paul, etc., you cannot but admit that the spirit of doubt and protest has done a great deal in bringing about the progress of humanity. But nowhere it was productive of such striking and immense results in quick succession as in the great intellectual movement which swept over Europe after the close of the middle ages. Let us take a few instances from the sphere of Science and other departments of knowledge.

There was a time when the Earth was considered stationary, and the Sun and the planets were supposed to go round it in their appointed courses. So the Christian Bible had said, and so the people had believed. Copernicus first doubted it, and published his heliocentric theory—that it is not the Sun and the planets that go round the earth, but that the Earth and the planets roll round the Sun. A few days after the publication of his theory, Copernicus died, and so did not live to see the revolution which it was destined to bring about. Gallileo propagated this heliocentric theory of Copernicus, and corroborrated it by making numerous discoveries with his telescope. But alas ! such was the obtuseness of the superstitious priesthood of his age that he was put to prison and had to suffer much for doubting the fictitious statements of the falsely faithful. Facts ultimately asserted themselves, and the glory of Gallileo is shining to-day to the eternal shame of the priests who, under the name of faith, came to fight against facts with the tortures of Inquisition.

Kepler, a well known name in Astronomy, believed that the planets are kept in their orbits by guiding angels. Newton doubted this theory of his predecessor, and explained the orbital motion of the earth and the planets by the simple laws of motion and attraction.

In old days, when Science had not shaken off animistic notions, Scientists used to believe that "Nature abhors vaccum." In those days some men observed that in suction pumps water rose to the height of 30 ft. and no more. They came to Gallileo, and asked the great natural philosopher for an explanation. Gallileo, who met with very little sympathy from the public when he brought out his philosophical theories, and so was not in good humour to answer the enquirers after investigation, replied that Nature abhors vaccum to the extent of 30 ft. only. It was left for Torrecelli, one of his disciples, to find out the true cause. He filled a tube sealed at one end and more than 30 inches long with Mercury, and inverted it in a trough full of the same metal. He found that the column of mercury came down and stood only at the height of 29 inches, and the upper part of the tube became empty. Calculating the weight of 29 inches of mercury, he found it to equal nearly the weight of a column of water of 30 ft. height of the same diameter. A right explanation was thus found out. It is the almost constant weight of the atmosphere that supports 29 inches of mercury in the tube, and the 30 ft. of water in the pump. Could Torrecelli make this discovery if he had not doubted the current notion of his times that "Nature abhors vacuum ?" Doubt alone revealed to him this grand truth which has lead to the invention of Barometer, and the development of the Science of Meteorology.

When the science of Chemistry was still in its infancy, chemists believed that when a combustible substance burns it gives out an invisible ethereal emanation called phlogiston. All combustible bodies were supposed to contain this phlogiston in large quantities, and lose it when they were set fire to. In consequence of this belief, it was thought that bodies lose in weight when they undergo combustion. It was Lavoisier who doubted this phlogistic theory, and found out by balance, that bodies, instead of losing, gain in weight when they burn, because, then they unite with the oxygen of the air. Thus was a great advance made in Chemistry through doubt.

Another Chemist and Doctor, Van Helmont made the first experiments with plants to study their physiology. He planted in a pot a young willow, and weighed it with the earth and the vessel. The weight was 5 lbs. only. He went on watering the plant with pure rain water, and found, after a time, when the plant had grown, that it weighed with the pot nearly 154 lbs. Allowing for the inevitable loss of a few ounces during watering, the plant had gained by more than 150 lbs. How came this enormous acquisition of weight? The question naturally arose in his mind. Van Helmont ascribed it to rain water, and formed exaggerated notions of its virtue.

It was left for Ingen-houss to doubt the belief of Van Helmont and find out the chief cause of the growth of plants, namely, the assimilation of carbon from the carbonic acid gas of the atmosphere.

If you study the history of different branches of Science, Biology, Physiology, Botany, Physics, Chemistry, Psychology, etc., you will find there numerous instances of similar nature, in all of which you will meet with the great achievements of doubt. Turning from these stories of the discovery of Nature's great laws, and their modes of operation, if you inquire into the ways of inventors, you will find that when ideas of invention struck their brains, they brooded over them, worked at them, and attempted to produce things which were regarded as impossible by the men of their age. Some of them appeared to their contemporaries as crazy men running after chimeras. Undaunted by ridicule, doubting the dissuations of their ignorant advisers, and confident of the truth of their dreams, they worked on and produced things to the wonder of the world. From the sewing machine, the invention of Elias Howe which has relieved womankind of the arduous task of making dresses, so graphically described in the doleful "Song of Shirt", to the steam locomotive, which has shortened time and space, and brought together men of distant lands in close union, all great inventions bear witness to the progressive character of the intellects of their inventors, and show that these great men did not accept, but doubted many false views of things propounded by their contemporaries. Those very men who taunted them, withheld their support from them, nay, even persecuted them, will now acknowledge the legitimacy of their doubting and protesting spirit.

Then again, if you study the histories of some of the world-wide spiritual and philanthropic movements, which have done so much to exalt the name of Europe, you will see the operation of the same spirit—the same power everywhere. The authority of Pope, the sale of indulgence of sins, and many other creeds and practices of the Romish church were doubted by Martin Luther, and so Protestantism had its birth. The freedom of the Protestant churches owes its existence to the doubt and protest of Luther. William Wilberforce and his compeers fought in the Parliament of England for the abolition of slave trade; and on the other side of the Atlantic, Abraham Lincoln and his fellow-leaders did the same. And what did many honest Christians do in those days? They tried their best to put down the anti-slavery movement. They argued that the slaves, if liberated, will rise up in revolt against their masters, and create immense mischief, but Lincoln and Wilberforce were not the persons to believe in every foolish statement made by misguided men. They doubted, fought on, and lived to achieve their ends, and to-day most Christians will be ashamed to have any connection with slavery.

Slowly and steadily under the powerful action of doubt, many false doctrines, many false creeds, and many pernicious practices have died and are dying away. But for it, the thorny path of progress would never have been trod by Western Nations. But for it, they never would have come by those spiritual, educational, and political institutions which are the glories of their civilization. But for it, they would never have invented those machines which have established their power and prosperity on earth. But for it, they would never have had that expansiveness which leads them to conquer foreign lands, and live in them as in their homes in their mother-country. All the great achievements of Western Nations are due to their progressive spirit, and this spirit, owes its origin to a great extent to doubt. Forward nations do not accept their surroundings as incapable of betterment, nor do they submit to dfficulties in a fatalistic mood. They do not say within themselves, " This is the end; here let us rest, and go no farther; let us trouble ourselves no more." But they " move onwards'', ever doubting the finality of their journey—ever fighting with evils that stand in their way and threaten to destroy the felicities of their lives. Theirs is the undaunted spirit that circumnavigates the earth trusting in a shadow *, discovers

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* "But though the church ever more from Holy Writ affirmed that the earth should be a wide-spread plain bordered by the waters, yet he (Magellan) comforted himself when he considered that in the eclipses of the moon

a new world by pushing forward through the unknown wastes of waters, penetrates into polar seas for the increase of knowledge, and makes towns with beautiful palaces and highways, and villages with trim corn fields and green hedge-grows, to spring up where there were tangled forests resounding with the howls of wild animals. They fight with two swords in their hands, one of faith, and the other of doubt, and the latter is as much needed in their conquering work as the former.

Often we hear now-a-days men saying that the East is contemplative—that orientals, especially, we Indians, love more of contemplation than of action. For thousands of years, we have been speculating on the deep and insoluble mysteries of the universe. Neglecting all healthful activities, which would have brought us to the fore-rank of the forward

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the shadow cast of the earth is round; and as is the shadow, such, in like manner, is the substance." It was a stout heart —a heart of tripple brass—which could thus against such authority, extract unyeilding faith from a shadow."—*Vide the history of Magellan's celebrated voyage round the world in Draper's Intellectual Development of Europe, Vol. II, Chap. V.*

nations of the world, we have been meditating on these mysteries, and probably will die, or be killed, like Archimedes, with our minds immersed not in geometrical problems, but in futile questions of speculative philosophy. These are the reproaches which are often laid at our doors.

Though the place of contemplation has been set very high by our ancient teachers, and the rapturous communion with the Infinite Spirit has been taught by them as the highest state which the human soul can aspire to in its spiritual efforts, yet never have these great men depreciated the value of action, or advocated its abandonment for quiscence and lethargy. Quietism, born of idleness and the perverted view of spiritual life, is not the ideal pointed to us as fittest for realization. Read our best old books, you will find there the religion of action preached in glowing language. Read the divine song, Bhagavad Gita, in solitude; bring back to your mind the scene in which its words were first spoken out ; imagine the great battle field bristling with countless arrows, spears, and other weapons of war and alive with the motion of warriors; hear, in your fancy, the loud sounds of conch-shells, drums, and trumpets, and the voices of heroes eager for the fight; and then listen! Rising high above the din and bustle of the imminent war, louder the blast of any mighty trumpet or the roll of thunder in heavens will come to you, over the sea of centuries, in all solemn grandeur, the voice of one stirring you up to work, fight for, and attain the aim of your life. Lord Krishna will tell you again and again not to confound inaction with contemplation, not to court pleasure or self-interest when duty demands hardship and sacrifice from you, and not to lapse into the vicious lethargy of delusion mistaking it for the sweet serenity of spiritual perfection. Nay, our sacred books will teach you that no man can reach the highest flight of contemplation unless he purifies his mind by a life of strenuous and disinterested activity. Unless you loosen the bonds of attachment that bind you down to the pleasures of the world, unless you lessen the power of selfishness, from which your cleavings to the world arise, and unless you learn to conquer your minds by controlling their motives, and thus gain strength of will, you can never expect to realize the repose of contemplative state. Work disinterestedly, cultivate the highest virtues for their own sake, expand yourselves in sympathy till you are one with all creatures; you shall be soon united with the Infinite Spirit. These are the teachings of our great masters of old. Whatever may have been our practice (and the practice of men sadly falls far short of their profession) it is our duty to shake off by all means any lethargy, any weakness, or weariness that may have crept upon us. This is the time, when we should gird up our loins and act, when we should labour for our greatest good never believing in the meanness of our destiny. This is the time, when we have been quickened with new life by the assimilation of western culture, when our hearts have become conscious of the immense powers sleeping in us that we should doubt and march onwards as the men of the west. This is the time, when we should, like the occidental people, engage in deep researches into the secrets of Nature, develop in us all the resourcefulness of invention, engage in commercial enterprises, which will make our presence felt all over the globe, and above all, consciously lift up our individual and social moral life towards perfection by searching out its defects with sincerity and removing them without scruple, and by bringing about in us the union of the virtues of the East and the West. And we, who have a splendid spiritual heritage coming down to us through thousands of years, have less chance of getting into those pit-falls of errors that some western people have fallen into.

Though much ignorance has already disappeared, many errors have already been dissipated from amongst us under the irresistible onslaught of Doubt, yet the path of progress is not clear, yet we are not moving at a desirable pace. Though, when we hear the clap of thunder, we no longer believe that the gods and the demons are fighting in the sky, nor listen with credulity to the details of oceans of milk, curd, and wine, or of witches travelling upon trees from one part of the world to another at a tremendous rate by witchcraft, yet there are many honest men who believe and circulate silly stories about men and things that out-bid in their miraculous character the tales of our grandmothers, and who try to support their statements by quoting the names of many mystery-mongering professors of some pseudo-science that believe in them. That multi-headed monster called Superstition has not died, but is still working mischief amongst us ; customs which our society has out-grown are, to use a Carlylean expression, still sticking to it in an ugly manner like old clothes ; baseless beliefs born in dark days and handed down to us from we know not when, are still distorting our vision, and preventing us from seeing the Truth. All these must be questioned. Doubt alone can destroy them; doubt alone can bring out light in the profound darkness created by them. But, remember, doubt not for doubt's sake, but for truth's sake.

Of all the vices which infest us and corrupt us to our very core, none is so pernicious in its nature as pride. Pride puffs our hearts and clouds our vision, makes us insensible to the best influences and blind to what is true, good, and beautiful. It is the father of many faults that mar the beauty of our lives. Pride begets anger, agressiveness, and unsocial nature. Who likes the company of him,who is telling you either by word or behaviour, that he is Fortune's favored child and you are her despised one, that he is a giant and you are a pigmy, that he is a lord and you are a slave? And all these may not have a grain of truth behind them. When an ignorant man has been convinced of his errors, when the light of reason shows him clearly the path he should follow, it is pride that, in most cases, prevents him from freeing his mind from all wrong notions, and doing what is right. But there are various forms in which this vice shows itself among men. It shows itself as the pride of wealth, the pride of power, the pride of learning, the pride of birth, and the pride of a host of other things, and worst of all, as the pride of religious creed. When a man vaunts of his wealth, we may forgive him if he has acquired his possessions by honest means, though we never think his mental attitude as worthy and commendable; when a man makes a display of his power or learning to advantage, we may easily overlook it so long as no serious harm does result from it; but when a man seriously believes and proclaims that his religious creed alone is true, and all others are false; that he and those who are of the same mind as himself hold the key to Heaven's gates and will enter therein, while the rest of mankind, who hold views different from theirs, however good their lives may be, will inevitably go to perdition; when we see any man showing his pride of faith in this way, we cannot but look upon him with suspicion, and consider him as a man of perverted mind. John Ruskin says, in one of his works, to the effect that he really is a fool who thinks there is no god, but a greater fool is he who thinks that god exists for himself. But do we not see many at the present day showing this greater foolishness by declaring that theirs is the kingdom of heaven, that they alone are entitled to the greatest blessings of the future state which all ordinary men look forward to as the fit end of their life's sorrowful struggles? And this special fortune of theirs, they say, is not due to any real greatness of conduct which elevates them above the rest, but to their acquiescence in some theological dogmas which others do not understand or cannot believe. Alas ! this false pride based upon superstitious faith has crept into the hearts of millions in this world. It has been the fruitful cause of much horrible warfare and bloodshed. It has estranged brothers from brothers, children from parents, and wives from husbands. It has, by sowing seeds of dissension, kept men apart and prevented them from being united in brotherly love. It has hindered the growth of love of truth, charity, and many noble qualities among men, and has kept the world immersed in darkness for ages. Even in these days, when religious war and religious persecution have almost disappeared from earth, do we not see men showing violent temper, speaking harsh words, and wounding the fine sensibilities of others under the influence of this false pride ? Do we not see intellectual dishonesty, sophistry, lying and chicanary condoned by this vice under the name of religion? This false pride of faith is not only to be found among some of the un-enlightened followers of religions other than ours, it reigns in all its noxiousness in the hearts of many sectarian persons amongst us. We see the Vaishnavite followers of the Visishtadwaitic school of philosophy hate the Adwaitins, the extreme Dwaitins, again, regard all but themselves in the wrong, the bigoted Sivites return the compliments of all of these, and thus arise much wrangling and bitterness of spirit, whenever some followers of these different schools meet and talk of great topics, such as, God and the Soul. Even some of the members of some modern religious societies, with their vaunted profession of universal brotherhood and ecclecticism, rise up in arms if any ventures to question their pet mystical and theological doctrines. But, in a worse manner than all these, this false pride shows its hateful nature, when a man by the mere circumstance of his birth and no other, claims an exclusive right to the grace of God. Are there not many such simple-minded people, who in their pride believe, that all others must come into this world, and pass through the gate-way of death many a time, before they can, by their

Karma, be born as they are, and unless, by repeated incarnations, they are fortunate to get into their castes, they can never attain Mukti. As if God consulted with these narrow-minded people when He decided about man's salvation ! Who has known the mind of the Most High ? Who has encompassed the Infinite with his thought ? Ignorant is man of his own nature in its entirety, dares he say that he has found out the Inscrutable ways of Providence ? In darkness he is somehow advancing towards his greatest good, thanking God for whatever glimmer of light He sends to illuminate his path, and make his journey smooth ; can he, forgetting his helplessness, boast that he has been apprised of the whole mind of God ? Can he, after scrutinising his heart with all sincerity and honesty, and examining the sources and the character of his knowledge, say that God, who is the God of Truth, the God of Justice, and the God of Infinite Mercy and Power, has not shown the right path to millions of His creatures, even when he sees them toiling as honestly as himself to be true, just, and merciful in their actions, and showing their reverence and love to Him, though in ways other than his own? Who is there so obtuse-headed, so blinded by prejudice, as will not comprehend the simple truth—that God is not the God of a few, but the God of all? Is the soul of the universe tainted with the human vice of partiality?

It may be urged by some advocates of sectarianism, that true it is that God is neither unjust nor unmerciful, but He has shown the path man should tread, the religious doctrine he should adopt and follow, by means of a Revelation. And whoever does not accept this Revelation cannot but suffer on account of his wilful neglect of the commands of God.

To these believers of any particular Revelation I say, Do not, my brothers, others like you, put their trust in other Revelations than yours? Do not the doctrines they hold are different from your doctrines? Does not Revelation contradict Revelation, and Authority stand against Authority? How am I to understand that yours is true, and theirs is false? Either we should somehow, by reasoning, reconcile Revelations accepted by the different religionists of the world, or we should find out those common doctrines of all religions, such as, love God, love humanity, and others of similar import, the truth of which is attested by the religious consciousness of all humanity, and acknowledging them as of supreme importance, regard as indifferent all the rest.

All enlightened men will accept what is reasonable. All disputes about doubtful points can be settled only by appealing to reason ; for there is no higher court. Every man of a little penetration can understand that the cardinal doctrines of all creeds are the same, and that these solid grains are neglected and hollow husks of non-essential dogmas are made much of by most of the professors of different creeds. With perverted minds, with the pride of faith indurating their hearts, they pass their days vainly noting their doctrinal differences from others, instead of their doctrinal unity with them. Thus do many professors of religion, instead of establishing peace and mutual good-will, keep up discord and mutual ill-will amongst men. Is this not lamentable ? Therefore, doubt that any good can come out of false pride, doubt the false doctrine of bigoted teachers, that it is not righteousness, but acquiescence in some theological dogmas of doubtful authority that leads unto God. Doubt this, and you will have made one step in your spiritual progress.

Next to this pride of religious creed is the vice of hatred which causes immense mischief amongst us. Not to speak of hatred that exists between some individuals, and that takes away so much of the sweetness of our lives, but of hatred that exists between different sections of the same community, between men of different parts of the same country, and between different races; how much of the miseries of life owe their origin to this vice which corrupts human hearts? If we reflect on our lives a little, we shall see this vice active in alienating ourselves from our brethren, in preventing that union and co-operation without which no real progress in any sphere can be made, no great work furthering our welfare can be achieved. But alas! we see, amongst us Indians, the men of the one half of a town hate and revile the men of the other half, the inhabitants of one town show ill-feeling towards the inhabitants of other towns, the residents of one district cry out against the residents of other districts, and the occupants of one province show spite against those of other provinces. And, especially, in South India, we see this evil in its glaring colour. Here there is much hatred between caste and caste. There is hatred between non-caste and caste Hindus ; there is hatred between different sections of Non-Brahmins ; and there is the same feeling showing itself in all prominence between Brahmins and Non-Brahmins. On account of the operation of the repulsive force of hatred, there is no genuine sympathy, but a great deal of suspicion and jealousy among the children of this great land. Though a few noble-hearted patriots may dream of national unity, and the prosperity and happiness that will follow in its wake, yet how far is the realization of their dream from the stern facts they have to face now. Every thoughtful man, that has the good of his country at heart, should feel deeply for this sad phenomenon, and try to prevent the disintegrating action of mutual hatred. The nation, on account of the wide prevalence of mutual hatred may be likened, to borrow the illustration of a great orator of England, to a beautiful mosaic consisting of costly stones, but with no cement to bind them together. Will this state last for ever? Shall we be ever flying away from one another in hatred, instead of joining our hands and hearts in mutual love? Should this demon have greater power over us than God?

We hear men talking loudly and much of the spiritual greatness of our ancient India, (and no one will deny it), but who feels sorrowfully for the spiritual degradation of modern India? Whose heart it is that cries out against the widely prevalent vice of hatred, and burns with a noble desire to bring about its end? You may try for the political regeneration of the country, you may toil for its industrial regeneration, you may work for its social regeneration, yet none of these efforts of yours will meet with success worth the name, if you do not struggle for its moral regeneration. The roots must be fed with nutriment in order that new life may course through the fibres of any half-dead plant. Let there be quickening of life-forces at the roots, and soon you will see tender shoots springing from the stem. Quicken the moral life of India in a true way—I say, in a true way, advisedly, for I see there is a tendency in persons to be satisfied with sham revivals of spirituality—set the vitalizing spiritual forces coursing through the fibres of her being, let them touch the remotest parts of her existence, and you will see her new birth again, you will see her once more smiling in the exuberance of new life. Remove this tendency to hate one another from your hearts ; root out the hatred of one caste for another, one section of society for another section ; root it out, for it is begotten in darkness and leads to darkness, and does good to none ; cultivate the habit of observing identity in diversity—the identity of blood, bones, and muscles in all men, the identity of thoughts and sentiments in them, and above all, the identity of Divine Essence that is present equally in all, alike in the Brahmin and the Pariah, in the men of one province and the men of another province, in the North-Indian and the South-Indian, and you will do a great deal towards bringing about the spiritual regeneration of India.

There are persons that, with mealy-mouthed sophistry, will tell you often and often not to loose sight of distinctions that exist between yourselves and others, will lay special emphasis upon many of the artificial differences that exist amongst men in society, saying, that they are of eternal character, and should, therefore, never be forgotten or done away with, and thus playing upon your long-cherished prejudices, puff up your vanity and blind your eyes to Truth. Yet, if you think a little, you will make out that these are the men that are trying to perpetuate hatred, though professing universal love, strengthen superstition, though pretending to fight against it, and keep up the reign of darkness, though seemingly seeking for light. Doubt his statement, if anybody says directly or indirectly, that any good can come out of hatred ; disbelieve, if anybody tells you that love and sympathy can corrupt human nature ; listen not, if anybody preaches that it is not good to feel for the underlying unity instead of the superficial variety in human beings.

Next to mutual hatred you are to guard yourselves against another vice that has insinuated itself into many hearts among us, and is spreading its evil influence all around, I mean the desire of displaying sentiments that are hardly genuine. This vice is but another form of hypocrisy, though on account of its wide prevalence among the high and the low, the rich and the poor, people do not call it by that ugly name, or condemn it in very strong terms. Call it by any name you please, yet it is the same old disease of the soul, the inclination for lying—lying sometimes in words, but more often in behaviour—against which the great masters of humanity have warned us at all times. Not by overlooking a disease or by giving it a mild appellation in an euphemistic way, that you can conquer it. Its poisonous germs will grow at the expense of your vital forces, and burst forth some day in all virulence to bring about your end. If you do not uproot the corrupting habit of making hypocritical display of sentiments which has grown so prevalent, I do not see any way in which the moral condition of our country can be improved, and upon moral improvement alone can rest, as upon a rocky foundation, all other improvements of our national life. I would not tell you all these, if I did not see that men that pass for worthy members of society, frequently give vent from public platforms to noble sentiments that they hardly feel, or even when they feel, that their actions hardly correspond with, when occasions arise for their embodiment in deeds. Alas ! we too often come across with so-called great persons that loudly proclaim their loyalty to the public interest, when the dominant sentiment of their hearts is selfishness, that pose themselves as the greatest champions of radical reforms in society, when, in their hearts, they are the stoutest supporters of old evil ways, and that clamour publicly for the most virtuous life in others, when they themselves are given to abominable vices. Even if we grant that 'the spirit is often willing, but the flesh is weak,' and so men's remiss practices should not always be taken as signs of disinclination to follow the right path, we cannot consider those that I am speaking of as belonging to the class of sincere but weak-minded men. I am speaking of those that have said in their hearts that the greatness coming from vain display and loud proclamation, and not that coming from truly noble deeds, is the thing needed to shine in this world. It is the false heart that perpetually generates false deeds. When the heart is wrong, even right actions are not right, if we judge them by the true moral standard. The presence of poison in fountain-head envenoms every particle of water that flows from it. These men with false notions of life and its work, are ever running after shadows taking them to do supreme realities. Spurning Truth they are grasping at Semblance.

Not only do these men show fondness for hypocritical behaviour, false expressions of thoughts and sentiments, where worldly interests are concerned, they display the same wrong disposition as regards religion which is connected with the eternal interests of man's existence. When they concern themselves with spiritual matters, it is not to be religious, but to seem religious, not to improve themselves, but to show others that they are improving themselves, not to engage in serious thoughts about

God and the Soul, but to let others know that they are seriously full of such thoughts. Perpetually anxious for others' approbation, they never care for the approbation of their own conscience. They are ever seeing themselves in others' faces; they never see themselves in the mirrors of their own souls. When such men join any religious society, they see first whether rich and influential names are found in its membership-roll. They care not a sand-grain for the rightness of the objects of such societies, or the rightness of means adopted for their realization. They have their own religion, which they care not to express in ever so many words before disbelievers; they have their own cult which they do not preach often, but which discerning men know to be the worship of ego and gold. They join religious societies, they show themselves greatly interested with movements set afoot for the spiritual elevation of humanity, they attend meetings, not so much out of interest for the objects of these gatherings as to please or court the acquaintance of men of their own set. But when an occasion arises for any great sacrifice on their part, when their piety is put to a severe test, they show themselves as they really are. Thus, even as regards the most sacred matters, they have no genuineness of feeling, what can we expect from them when things of less moment are concerned ?

Not only these hypocritical men are themselves corrupted, but they are corrupting others by their example. Even young men are being contaminated with this vice of hypocrisy. And what can you expect from them, when they whom they look up to as the ensamples of their lives have set so much value upon false behaviour. Trained in an atmosphere of falsehood generated by the unworthy actions of those who ought to behave better, they grow into false men who talk with feigned lips and engage in deceitful deeds. I have met with young men that formed an imaginary soceity with a large number of imaginary members, and with seemingly laudible objects for its activity, in twelve hours, to hoodwink and please some rich man whom they intended calling in for occupying the chair in a meeting. But alas ! as soon as the meeting was over, and its purpose achieved, the fictitious society was brought to an end sooner than it was formed. I have seen young men making false display, before the public, of great and good works that their club or association was doing, when the club or association was really dwindling into non-existence on account of its inactivity. These are comparatively insignificant instances. I give them merely to suggest to your minds many others which you are personally acquainted with, and over which your mind cannot go back without shame and sorrow.

It is not sham that can elevate man ; it is not shadow, that can bring him satisfaction ; it is not fiction, but facts, that can save him from danger. Yet the desire of sham display is being learnt by the young from the old. The seeds of ruin are being sown by men of advanced age, when health and life should have come from them.

A natural consequence of the wide prevalence of this vice is the abnormal importance attached to 'newspaper reputation'. Many are over-anxious to see their names in print. The great are desirous, so small men are also desirous to see their names blazed in the columns of journals. The rich can easily command the respect of the publishers, and get themselves amply advertised, even if their names do not carry weight on account of their inherent worth ; what can the insignificant men do ? They can only rejoice over the occasional mention of their names in paragraphs, or feel pride in being unpaid correspondents. A mania for being advertised has seized all. But alas ! they do not think of the fate of those very papers, in which they see themselves ' boomed', after a few years. Who will remember the contents of those fugitive sheets ? What will be their end ? They will be buried in oblivion for ever. Newspapers have a value of their own, but they should not be allowed to take up the place of conscience. Approval of one's conduct in their columns, cannot in any way wash away one's wickedness.

Will you then forgetting the true interests of your life clutch at shadows ? Will you then care for the transient opinion of men, and not for the approval of your conscience ? Or have you stifled it so long, vitiated it so much that it does not speak in certain terms any more ?

Free yourselves from the false view of life that false men of the world are perpetually preaching by their examples. Display not in words, like these, what you have not in your heart. What availeth it, if you gain the good opinion of others, when you stand guilty before God and your own soul? Do not believe, that wealth and worldly possessions can ever sanctify hypocrisy, which bears the eternal and unerasible stamp of evil upon its face. There is an eternal difference between truth and falsehood, genuiness and hypocrisy, as there is between darkness and light, and the one removes a man as much from God as the other brings him close to His presence. Do not believe in the false ideals of life that worldly men have set up. They will tell you again and again that it is impossible to do without them in this world. Unless you are selfish, proud, and look down upon the lowly and the poor, though professing charitable feelings for them, unless you give yourselves up to various forms of hypocrisy condoned by polite society, you cannot prosper in this world. And without worldly prosperity, be it gained by fair means or foul, what is there for which to bear the burden of existence ? Thus the wiseacres of the world will advise you. Question their statements, their creeds, and their ways of life. Accustomed to live in a wordly atmosphere—an atmosphere full of the stink of selfishness and thousand vices springing from it, they can neither breathe nor imagine the blissfulness of a pure and lofty life. When we think of them we are reminded of the fishermen of a parable that our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to relate.

At one time, some fishermen went out to sell fish in a market situated at some distance from their homes. While returning, after finishing their business, they were overtaken by rain and storm on the way. They ran on, drenched to the skin, but could not find shelter anywhere for a long distance. At length, they came upon a gardener's hut built in the midst of a fine flower-garden. On they rushed, and knocked at the door of the hut. The gardener, who was a good-hearted man, opened the door immediately and greeted them with all kindness. He gave them dry clothes to put on and requested them to make themselves quite at home. As the rain did not stop, the fishermen were compelled to remain there for the night. The gardener, with winning hospitality, brought out of his simple stores food sufficient for all, and shared with them. Then spreading some beds upon the floor, he requested them to lie down, and himself did the same. The fishermen complied with his request. In a few minutes, the gardener was in deep slumber, but the fishermen tried their best to sleep, yet did not succeed at all. They closed their eye-lids, turned on their sides, yet sleep refused to come to them. Though the window of the hut was open, yet there was something oppressive in the air which they could not tolerate. The gardener had culled the best flowers from the garden, and kept them in baskets in one of the corners of his room. The air was full of their sweet odour. Accustomed to sleep in rooms where the smell of fish perpetually prevailed, they could not bear the fragrance of flowers, and so they had no sleep all the night. Early in the morning, when the gardener rose from his bed, they bade him good-bye, and went on their way. As they proceeded on the road, the oppressive sensation seemed not to leave them—such was the lingering effect of the experience of the night. They were not feeling quite well. Thus, in no cheerful mood, they hastened towards their homes. Then, suddenly they were filled with joy, as they saw some fishermen coming towards them with baskets of fish. The odour of fish, even from a distance, began to revive their spirits. They ran to the brethren of their trade, requested them to stop a while, and then bringing their noses close to the baskets, quaffed their odour to their hearts' content. Then they began saying among themselves, " Now brethern, we are all right ; now the choking feeling is gone ; we wonder how the gardener lives in that stinking room."

Like these fishermen, worldly men cannot bear the pure atmosphere of a strictly righteous life. All the noble qualities that enrich such life have no attraction for them. They feel uneasy if they see their heroic manifestations in any lowly person. Nothing, in their sight, produces greatness in a man except the possession of gold and the power that such possession brings. It is good, according to these, to read of moral qualities in books, or to extol them in conversation, but to struggle for attaining them to perfection in life and to sacrifice pleasures of the world for their sake, is next to madness ; no sensible man should do so. Do not think and believe with them. Doubt the soundness of their views. Doubt the efficacy of their ideals in bettering human life. In doubting alone here lies your salvation.

It is not always good to believe, but, at times, it is good to doubt and disbelieve. Progress in spiritual as well as in other matters is possible when a man believes in a higher state and disbelieves in the finality of the lower, believes in truth and disbelieves in falsehood, believes in good and disbelieves in evil. It is not always by conformity to old ways, but at times by revolt against them, that man can really advance. But let me remind you here again, that the seeker after Truth and the felicities that the knowledge of Truth brings with it, doubts, revolts, and discards to believe, submit, and accept. He doubts and dispels falsehood to believe and embrace Truth, revolts against the immoral ways of himself and others to submit under the yoke of moral life, and discards superstition and effete customs to accept wisdom and wholesome customs. As his vision is directed to the Highest, and he sees by the light that comes from the Fountain-head of all lights, so he has a finer and higher vision of things than the men of the world; so he never trips, but marches on with sure steps to the goal of his life. He hates moral anarchy from the bottom of his heart, and reverences intensely the Moral Order. He introduces more perfect order and harmony in the spiritual and other spheres of the world by his doubt and dissent.

Thus doubting and disbelieving in the necessity of cherishing pride, hatred, hypocrisy, and many other vices which have acquired wide sway over human hearts at the present day, and putting no trust in the false splendour of the false life of the worldly, but turning your backs entirely to their crooked ways, when you will enter on the narrow but straight path—the path that the true-hearted alone tread and that leads unto Light; when you will march onward with firm faith in the words of the great masters of the world and unflinching confidence in the goodness of God combating and conquering thousand dangers and difficulties that Evil may set up on the way,—conquering them not by force of arms, but by force of true thoughts, true words, and true deeds; when you will advance with indomitable courage, blessed experiences—experiences of ineffable joys coming from the growth of a clean conscience and the blossoming of a many-sided virtuous life,—like mines of gold and diamond, shall be revealed unto you by the grace of God. By His grace, when your heart will be entirely cleared of its impurities; when, like a polished mirror, it will be fit to shine in supreme brilliancy in His light; then you shall be able to perform, like the last lifting up of the foot from the final step of a flight of stairs, the final act of doubting, saying "Neti," "Neti"—"Not this," "Not this,"—and disbelieving in the reality of the world and its pleasures, accept and live for ever in the Supreme Reality of Divine Presence.

May you all never rest, but "Move Onwards," undaunted by obstacles you may encounter on the rough way of Life, till you find the Abode of Eternal Light and Peace.

II

THE ETHICAL STANDARD.

If a man, who is riding at a dangerous pace along a road that borders a deep precipice and is full of sharp turns, difficulties, and dangers, be questioned as to where he is going, and if he seriously replies that it matters very little as to where he is going, so long as he is going at a rapid rate, what do we think of such a man? A man riding in hot haste along a dangerous path without caring at all for his destination! Is he a lunatic or a fool? Such is our opinion about him. Even if he succeeds in telling us of the end of his ride, but fails, out of ignorance, in telling whether he has taken the right road—the shortest and the safest to the goal of his journey—or not, we do not change our opinion, but continue to suspect that he may not be sound in the head.

A man of sound judgment never undertakes a journey along a dangerous path without some knowledge of his destination, and the rightness or the wrongness of the way. Yet, if we compare our life to a long journey, how many of us are fully aware whither we are going, how many can answer, when questioned, whether we are following the right path or not ? We are all engaged in the various affairs of our lives, we are all elbowing our way through the hurry and confusion of this world, we are rushing onwards in spite of fortune and misfortune, sunshine and shower, but do we ever ask whitherward ? May we not be heedlessly running towards a yawning chasm ? May we not be precipitating ourselves to the gaping jaws of Death ? Should we not know something about the End of Life, and the way that leads unto it ? Aye, it is the duty of every man to know whither-ward he is moving, and whither-ward the society of which he forms a part is moving. It is the duty of every man to know whether the path along which he or the society in which he lives, is going, leads unto Life or Death—Good or Evil.

A ship, laden with costly merchandise and still costlier human lives, sails away from the harbour, leaving land behind. She floats far off in the bosom of the ocean. The darkness of night sets in, the waves toss the vessel up and down, the winds whistle through her sails and cordage, but the guiding mariner, steady and calm, looks up to the shining lights of the sky and the compass-needle to steer her clear of all dangers and bring her safe to the end of the appointed voyage. Even so, as we float in the Ocean of Life, we may be tossed up and down by the freaks of fortune, we may be surrounded by thousand difficulties and wrapped in the darkness of dejection, yet we should never cease looking up to moral principles for our guidance. In these principles alone lies our safety. Guiding ourselves by their light alone, we may hope to fulfil the purpose of our voyage through life.

All moral principles and ideas, which should be like lights on our path, are included in and expressed by the general idea of the Good. If we understand what is meant by goodness, we understand then what is meant by truth, justice, and other principles, for they are all embraced by this term and flow from it. The end of Ethics is to find out the nature of the Good, just as the end of Logic is to find out the nature of the True, and that of Æsthetics, the nature of the Beautiful. By enquiring into the nature of the Good, we shall have a standard to measure the value or worth of the activities of our lives. Often it happens with all of us, that in the complex circumstances of life, we are in a fix to find out how we should act, what course would be advisable for us to follow, what conduct would be good or right. Our mind oscillates in doubt and hesitation, and until a decision is arrived at, there is no peace in our soul. In those trying moments, nothing will extricate us out of the difficulty so easily as a clear knowledge of the ethical standard—the standard by referring to which we may pitch upon one course of conduct out of many as the right or the good. Again we too often pass without deliberation adverse judgments upon others' conduct, if it happens to deviate considerably from that to which we ourselves are accustomed. Any newness in a man's behaviour is looked with suspicion by us. But how often, after a time, experience reconciles us to it, nay, often proves to us that our prejudice was baseless, that we were wrong in condemning what was right. On such occasions, nothing will save us from regrettable error, but a clear notion about the nature of the right and the wrong.

There are two ways by which we may get at the knowledge of the ethical standard, first, by finding out some self-evident fact of our nature or human society and deriving it therefrom; second, by making enquiries as to what should be the aim of our life and then founding the ethical standard upon it. Different schools of Philosophy have followed either the one or the other of these methods. So let us have a brief review of the opinions of some of them, before we attempt at finding out the basis of morals according to Vedanta Philosophy.

The oldest notion about the moral standard is that of conformity to customs. Men, in the early stage of their social development, are guided by customs. Whatever is customary is moral, and whatever deviates from customs is immoral in their sight. The word moral bears in its etymology witness to this primitive mode of thought. As human society develops, laws gradually take the place of customs. These laws, formulated generally by a chief or chiefs, acquire a halo of sanctity as days pass by. Exacting obedience from all the members of society, establishing order and harmony where there were chaos and discord, bringing the advantages of mutual help and prosperity to its adherents, they in the course of time appear to most men as of superhuman origin. A man who violates any of these laws is considered immoral or miscreant, and is punished by society.

Not only in the early stages of human society, we find that conformity or non-conformity to customs or laws is the sole test employed by men in judging conduct, we see the same tendency repeating itself in the life-history of the individual. A youth, whose reflective powers have not developed much, knows no other standard of morality. With him also, the customary is good, and its contrary, bad. Whatever he sees others do, he imitates. Though curiosity inclines him at times to new modes of activity, yet, when he engages in them, he reconciles himself to them by reasoning that they are of the same nature as those to which he is habituated. And his notions of morality are based upon the mandates of his parents—laws laid down by them.

That the oldest notion of morality is that of conformity to Laws, may also be seen from such passages from our ancient books as, "*Tasmāchchāstram pramānam te Kāryakārya Vyavasthitau*" and "*Chodanā lakshano dharma.*" "Therefore Shastras or injunctions laid down in sacred books are your guides in finding out the rightness or the wrongness of actions." "Dharma is of the nature of an injunction." But, if you reflect a little, you will make out that laws however carefully made, however much dignified in their origin and sanctified by time, can never be applicable to men at all times. Human society never remains in the same state for ever. As the sun, the moon, and the stars are moving, as there is motion in the earth and change everywhere on its surface, societies of living creatures are exposed to different conditions at different times. They cannot remain stationary. There is no rest, but complex movement everywhere in Nature. Nature cries out to all living beings, "Move on, or die." So human society, influenced by this complex movement of Nature, cannot but change. It is changed not only on account of its changed relations with the inanimate and the animate world outside itself, but also on account of the changed relationship of its own parts. The different races, tribes, and other sections of society are influencing one another's lives, and their relations are continually changing. Some are becoming dominant, others going down; some prosperous, others poor; some intellectually great, others great in military power. Thus the complex conditions of life do not allow any portion of humanity to remain in the same state. How can then any society of human beings be guided by the same laws that were formulated for its ancestors who were living under different conditions of life? So laws which cannot take into cognisance vicissitudes of times and place, must change from age to age.

In our ancient books, rules for the guidance of almost all the various affairs of life were laid down by law-makers in old days. Whatever actions men usually perform, from morning, when he gets up from bed, to the hour of the night, when he retires to rest, they were all regulated by injunctions. Old law-givers laid down rule after rule to curb the instinctive unruliness of human nature. So in our Scriptures there are minute rules of eating, rules of bathing, rules of walking, rules of sleeping, and rules of thousand other things which human beings do from day to day. These form the body of our books on Laws. Some of these laws have lost their meaning, or have become quite unsuited to our modern life. This is tacitly admitted by even the most orthodox of Hindus, though if any man were to avow it in so many words, the orthodox would immediately raise a hue and cry about it. The very name of change scares and puts them out of temper. Yet, if you enquire into the lives of these very men, you will see that they have broken many of these old laws whose guardians they constitute themselves to be. Do we not see many Vaidika Brahmins educating their sons for serving Government or private persons, notwithstanding Shastric injunctions against it, or allowing them to adopt professions condemnable in Brahmins? Do we not see them slowly abandoning those tedious rules connected with the various activities of life, such as, ablution, eating, sleeping, residence, etc.? Yet, if you express the idea that change is unavoidable, progress is necessary, they look down upon you. One of the inevitable consequences of this attitude of theirs is the wide prevalence of inconsistency in the conduct of people. The orthodox are not really orthodox. Either consciously or unconsciously, they have become the supporters of hypocrisy and cant. Every man of a little discernment can understand that customs and laws—which are the formulated expressions of customs— must change with the progress of time. If you study the past history of India, you will find that many customs that were in vogue in old days are dead, and the laws that were laid down in connection with them are no longer obeyed by the priesthood or the laity. The practice of killing cows has been abandoned. Vedic sacrifices in which innumerable animals used to be destroyed as offerings have been replaced by travesties of them or more harmless ceremonies. The drinking of spirituous liquors has been interdicted. Marriage rules have undergone change, in so much that the marriage customs of Mahabharta appear strange to many of the present age. With the Universal change of Nature, our Indian Society has undergone change, though the conservative members of it seem not to perceive it.

From what we have said it will be clear that laws, however good they may be, can never give us an ethical standard useful at all times; they can never furnish us with an unchangeable test-principle of conduct. If we can stop the incessant changes of Nature, if we can tell the stars and the earth obey our mandates, then we may expect customs and laws to remain unchanged and thus give us an ethical standard in the form of conformity to them. But that is impossible.

Then where are we to go to seek for a sure guiding-principle of conduct, if customs and laws fail to give us any? Are we to follow them blindly and pay the penalty of being ill-adapted to the changing conditions of life? Are we to grope our way in the dark through all the activities of life, not knowing what is good and what is evil ?

Many will answer these questions by saying that it is not in the conformity to laws and customs that exist outside yourself, but in the conformity to the decisions of the stern judge that dwells within you that you can find the sure guiding-principle of conduct. Ask your conscience or your Antaratma, what is good and what is evil ; you will be in no doubt about them. Conscience is a stern monitor. He speaks in no uncertain voice. Whenever a man commits any wicked action, his conscience raises a protest and points out the right conduct to him. When the murderer has lifted the shining steel and is about to plunge it into the heart of his victim, even then the still voice from within cries out, " Hold ! Despicable wretch ! Hold !! " When the high-way robber is on the point of throwing noose round the neck of the belated way-farer, even then his conscience clamours and pulls back his hand. When, under the cover of night, the adulterer is bent upon his wicked act ; when, casting off shame and self-respect, he is about to plunge himself into the depth of sin ; even then his ever-watchful benefactor knocks heavily at his heart, and says, "Thou shalt not do that !" Thou shalt not do that !" Even after the vile deed has been committed, the unrelenting voice continues to shame the agent with reproaches and bring him back to the way of rectitude. Let him fly wherever he pleases after the commission of sin, conscience, like his shadow, leaves him not, but stings him with remorse. What better guide can we find elsewhere ? Where can we search for the test-principle of right and wrong but in our own bosom ? Thus will say some philosophers and some common men.

Though much of what they aver is true, yet if you reflect deeply, you will see that conscience cannot always be a safe guide. Though this moral faculty is more or less perceptibly present in all individuals, yet its verdicts are not identical. The judgments of conscience are not universally valid as they vary in different persons. What, after all, are these judgments ? Do they not originate from the habitual modes of thought and feeling of men ? Do not pangs of conscience arise when actions jarring against inclinations born of habitual thoughts and feelings are committed ? Do they not disappear when men get accustomed to the very actions that gave rise to them. If conscience be so fluctuating in its nature, how can it be a sure guide ? How can its verdicts be regarded as guiding principles of conduct ?

Observe, how the verdicts of conscience are different in different individuals. Many North-Indian Brahmins are not strict vegetarians like the Brahmins of the south. The conscience of the former does not usually rebuke them when they eat animal food, whereas the very idea of eating flesh-food is revolting to the latter. But many a South-Indian Brahmin marries his sister's daughter which is entirely repulsive to the conscience of the Brahmins and other inhabitants of the north. A South-Indian Non-brahmin, without feeling any scruples of conscience, rears, kills as offering in temples, and eats fowl, whereas the touch of the fowl is abominable to many of his brothers in the north. The conscience of a Coorg gentleman permits him to dine at the same table with a foreigner, but a Mysorean, for his conscience, will never stoop to do so.

To mention other glaring instances. The conscience of a cannibal is not the same as the conscience of a civilized man. Many savage people have not the same notions of chastity as civilized men. They will allow their wives to sleep with their guests without any scruple. Some savage races commit murder outside their tribes without any remorse. The Spartans used to expose their children and kill out the weak ones. Can we say that the verdicts of conscience of these races are one with those of modern civilized humanity ? The conscience of India at one time permitted the immolation of widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands, and to-day, it is bringing out various proposals for removing the hardship of their lot.

Not only conscience varies in different individuals, but its force gets deadened, its voice stifled under a persistent life of irrectitude. A hardened thief or dacoit will not feel any remorse in stealing or doing daring acts of dacoity. The Thugs were throwing noose and strangling men without any qualms of conscience. Nay, a man's conscience may get so much perverted that man-slaughter may be committed by him under a false sense of duty.

Again the verdicts of conscience are not always proportionate to the gravity of the offences committed. Often a trivial mistake causes men more pain than a grave deviation from morality. A slight breach of social etiquette will often cause more disturbance of mind in a man of the world than the uttering of a white or a black lie. Some will feel more pain if their poverty is known than if they are found living in concubinage with others' wives.

If the verdicts of conscience are uncertain, if they originate from our habitual modes of thought and feeling, (and these are generally moulded by the society in which we live), if conscience be merely the fluctuating voice of society speaking through us, where are we to go for a standard ?

Some say that we should seek for some aim of our life—an aim of our life towards the attainment of which our whole nature is consciously or unconsciously tending. From the discovery of that aim, we should have to glean the nature of the ethical standard. Actions that favour the attainment of that aim should be thought as good, and actions that hinder it should be regarded as bad.

Here come some philosophers and say: Study human nature deeply, you will find as its supreme characteristic, desire for happiness. Man desires for wealth, power, honour, and so many other things in this world, he incessantly toils for them, but what for? Does he not care for them, because he thinks them to be conducive to his happiness? From the child to old man, every one seeks for happiness. Desire for happiness is the self-evident fact of human nature. You may ask, Why man wants wealth, why he craves for a good name, or why he is bent upon getting into power, and get an answer for each of these questions, but no answer can be had for the question, why he wants happiness. He desires for happiness for no other purpose than to be happy. As in human nature, there is an instinctive desire for happiness, so happiness should be regarded as the aim of our conduct, that is, of actions we voluntarily perform with self-consciousness. Conduct that furthers happiness should be regarded as good, and conduct that detracts or destroys happiness as bad. Here we have a standard by which we can find out surely whether our and others' conduct is good or bad—here is a means of making out the straightness or the crookedness of the course of our life.

And some who agree with these philosophers will say (rightly or wrongly), Do not our shastras speak of *Duhkhhanivritti* (cessation of misery) as the supreme aim of our life?

But, at the outset, a question arises in our minds, if happiness should be regarded as the aim and guiding-principle of our conduct, then why those great souls, whose conduct humanity admires so much and regards as ensample for all men to imitate, do not look upon happiness as the aim of their lives? Did the great saints that died cheerfully upon the cross or faced with fearlessness other forms of violent death, regard happiness as the desired object of their lives? Did Jesus, whom a great part of humanity worships as their saviour, die for the sake of happiness? Did Socrates, long before him, lift the cup of hemlock to his lips thinking that happiness will come of his heroic act? Or did the numerous saints of India embrace homelessness and poverty seeking for happiness? And do those scientists of modern times that endanger their lives in studying the nature of poisonous gases, or spend watchful nights and long laborious days in investigating nature, in putting repeated questions to her and waiting for some answers—some knowledge of her secrets—think happiness as the desideratum of their lives? Do they not often suffer more than enjoy? The mother bending tenderly over her sick child through the long watches of night and the philanthropist visiting the infected in hospitals and the depraved in dungeons, care not for their happiness, and it is for that alone, that their heroic conduct excites our admiration.

It may be urged that all these great men, who sacrifice their lives and energies for some noble end, derive great satisfaction from it.

Even when they are going to die, they have the satisfaction from the thought that the cause, for which they are giving up their lives, is just, and this satisfaction has, in their sight, far greater worth than all the fleeting pleasures of the world to which other men are addicted But one would ask, can this feeble satisfaction weigh against the vast amount of pleasure they renounce? Unless we admit a qualitative difference between one form of happiness and another, we cannot understand, even a little, why a man should give up more for less, value a diamond-atom of satisfaction more than a heap of earthly pleasures. In fact, one of the greatest exponents of the happiness-principle, John Stuart Mill, admitted this qualitative distinction in different forms of happiness, when he wrote that it is far better to be a discontented Socrates than a satisfied fool. We are often convinced of the truth of this remark when we cast our eyes upon the listless herd of the vulgar, who spend their round of days in eating, drinking, merry-making, and trivial talk with no regretful look upon the past and no wistful glance of hope to the future, whose lives are not far removed from the lives of brutes wallowing in the mire, and then turn our eyes to the truly great men—men of thousand sorrows—who toil ceaselessly for the realisation of some noble dream, probably, a dream of removing poverty, drunkenness, or some other evil from society, or a dream of finding some truth of Nature, of which they have a faint glimpse, and for which they receive from the disbelieving world showers of taunt and derision. Who will like to exchange his life for that of the senseless herd, for the sake of gross pleasures, instead of for the hard and sorrowful life of the great and the good ? What sensible man will not like to climb up the steep path of greatness though it may cost him a great deal of trouble, instead of sliding easily down into the vale of degradation ? A healthy mind hates the thraldom of sensuality. It will rather suffer much pain than allow itself to be chained by it. It ever desires to be free, and feel its own strength and greatness. A life of gross and sensual pleasure is incompatible with its development.

Then, again, another difficulty arises in accepting happiness as the aim of our lives. For, it is obvious that if we all seek for it, without any consideration for others who may also be doing the same, will not our interests often clash with their interests ? And, if all of us be bent upon realising our own happiness alone and recklessly pursue it, without caring for others' happiness, we shall get more misery than happiness in the struggles of our lives. Selfish pursuit of pleasure will lead to frequent conflicts amongst us, and all the evils of war will arise therefrom. If we leave out morbid pleasures that may be felt by some in such conflicts through the gratification of their fighting instincts, the net result will be misery and misery alone. So, if we are to accept at all the happiness-principle, we should understand by the word happiness, not only our happiness, but the happiness of others also, as consistent with our own, in other words, to use an expression well known to the students of Ethics, " the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

But admit as we must a qualitative difference between one form of happiness and another, so again we find great difficulty in accepting happiness as the desirable aim of our actions. For, what is the test-principle by which we are to regard one form of happiness superior to another? One loves, when he gets a little leisure from his daily toil, to take a walk in open fields and enjoy the beauties of Nature. The sight of blue hills, or emerald fields waving with corn, or the golden light of the summer sun resting upon green leaves fills him with a thrill of joy. Another finds no pleasure in these beautiful sights, but spends his spare moments in playing at cards in the close atmosphere of a club-house. One loves his library—the companionship of books is agreeable to him; he attends, from day to day, upon dead and living authors and listens to their words of wisdom. To another books are an abomination. He rarely opens any, and will not save them, even if he sees them perishing from damp, fire, or the attack of worms; he finds pleasure in gossiping of men and things, and spends most of his time in such useless pursuits. You may say, The first is far happier than the second. I will ask, For what reason ? If you admit a qualitative distinction—superiority and inferiority in two forms of pleasure, you must admit also that there is a test-principle to judge them with ; and that test-principle should be regarded as the standard of ethical judgment, and not happiness itself. For that is the ultimate principle to which we must refer to find out the rightness or the wrongness of conduct.

Thus argue critics of the hedonistic theory. That happiness should not be the aim of our conduct is held by the greatest religious teachers of the world. We are taught, again and again, by these great masters, to turn from pleasure and listen to the voice of Duty when there is antagonism between them. Our great sacred book Bhagavadgita opens with this subject, *viz.*, the conflict of pleasure and duty. Arjuna wanted to follow the pleasant course of shrinking away from the battle, and thus avoiding the sight of the death of his relatives. But Sri Krishna urged upon him the necessity of treading the more heroic, though difficult, path of doing his duty under those trying circumstances without any regard to consequences.

Kathopanishat says, "The good and the pleasant are different ; they satisfy man differently ; they attract him. He fares well who takes the good ; he that makes his choice of the pleasant, falls off from the purpose of his life." Again, "The good and the pleasant come to man. The wise distinguishes between them and prefers the good to the pleasant, while the unwise, bent upon acquisition and accumulation, chooses the pleasant." Thus the Upanishat condemns the view-point of those that seek for only pleasure in their actions. Happiness should not therefore be the aim of our conduct, especially when the course that leads to it runs counter to the course of duty.

There is another school of philosophers, who do not regard happiness, but perfect adaptation to environments as the aim of our conduct, though they admit that happiness will come from such adaptation. These philosophers, called Evolutionists, have shown from the history of the development of all living creatures upon Earth, that all of them are becoming more and more adapted to their environments. It is impossible to give briefly the vast amount of evidence they have brought forward in corroboration of their view, yet let us try to understand a little of their standpoint.

What do we understand by adaptation to environments ?

If you bring a new plant from a foreign country and plant it in your own, you watch with care its growth. If the climate is favourable, and the food that the plant wants for its growth is found in the soil, and if other conditions that are conducive to its life and development are abundantly supplied, it immediately shows signs of life with vigour. It gradually spreads out branches on all sides and in due season, bears flowers and fruits. We say, The plant is adapted to its new environments. If, on the other hand, the soil is poor in elements that are needful for its growth, if the temperature of the air is unpropitious, or other conditions are unfavourable, the plant withers away in a short time. We say, The plant is not adapted to its environments. There is discord between its life and its surroundings.

Or, it may happen that the plant may live, and have a stunted growth, but may not bear flowers and fruits. Then, we say that the plant is ill-adapted to its environments. In that case, there is no perfect adjustment between its life and its surroundings. Let us take another instance. Imagine a herd of cattle grazing on a plain, and imagine also that there are wild animals to prey upon the herd. Generally, in such cases, the different members of the herd will graze together and remain united, so that they may easily withstand the attack of any beast of prey. Suppose, if one of the herd shows inclination to graze apart from others, it will be killed by any wild beast sooner than others, on account of its anti-social tendency. Or, if it shows the same tendency by making itself obnoxious to others by its pugnacious habits, then, probably, it will be thrown out of the herd by the rest, and, sooner or later, it will be attacked in its isolation. We say that this particular animal is ill-adapted to social life, and so it loses life earlier than the rest of the herd.

Life and its benefits, say Evolutionists, flow more and more from its greater and greater adaptation to environments. In Nature, there is a keen struggle for existence for every creature. Every living being is trying its best to live, multiply, and seize as much benefits of life as possible. One of the consequences of this struggle is warfare between different forms of life. Man is not free from this struggle. To combat against the untoward forces of Nature and wild animals, he has entered into social state, and to the social conditions of life, he is adapting himself more and more. In primitive times, he used to live in small tribes and spend most of his time in warfare. Those tribes have gradually fused into races and nations, and warfare has, to a great extent, been supplanted by agriculture and industry. Yet he is not perfectly adapted to social life. Racial hatred and national quarrel are still to be found amongst men. Again, among the members of the same race, there can be seen competition, mutual jealousy, and many other evil traits, all proceeding from man's self-seeking tendency. The self-seeking inclination bursts out in some in the form of criminal acts. All the miseries of human life owe their origin to man's egoistic impulses. So man, even civilised man of the present day, is not perfectly adapted to social life. As warfare and its milder form, selfish struggle, will gradually die away, man will be more and more social, better and better adapted to his environments. We may imagine a state of development of human beings, says Mr. Herbert Spencer, one of the greatest exponents of evolutionary theory, when selfishness of man will, under the civilizing process, be entirely replaced by desire for others' good. Nay, we can conceive of a state of human society, in which, instead of the present competition of self-interest, there will be competition amongst men for serving and doing good to one another. In that society, grown perfectly social and perfectly civilized, not only men would not, like men of the present times, be bent more upon their own than others' interests—not only they would desist from injuring others—but they would always vie with one another in loving and being mindful of others' good in a practical way. In that society, there will not exist selfishness to cause a friction of interests, nor jealousy to mar the beauty of human relations. That society, like a perfect machinery with perfectly adjusted parts, or like a living organism with all its members in efficient and harmonious co-operation and help, will move on in perfect felicity. Conduct that helps forward such Perfect Adaptation is to be considered as good, and conduct that goes against it is to be regarded as bad.

Now, the question naturally arises in our minds, will there be any such perfect state in future, however distant that future may be. Can we expect to realise, in this ever-changeful universe, a state of society, in which man's wicked nature will be entirely transformed into a heavenly one, and his deep-seated self-seeking inclination replaced by a habitual desire for others' good?

Some philosophical writers are of opinion that though we do not know whether any such perfect state will be actually realised or not, yet, from the lines of development of man's moral nature, we may infer the course he should follow in order to attain perfection. We see that by giving up vices more and more, by rooting out more and more anti-social tendencies from his nature, by casting off more and more evil inclinations he has brought down from savage state, nay, even from his remote brutal ancestry, by cultivating virtues, man is growing nobler and nobler. From what he has become, as a civilized virtuous man, we may conclude that he is approximating a type, and the civilized society, of which he forms a part, is also doing the same. What that type of individual perfection or what that perfected society may be, we neither know nor can fully imagine. Yet the path along which man should advance in his moral development is clear to us. It is his duty to press forward in that path. He should, as a self-conscious and rational being, live a life of virtue, for, in that life alone his rational nature can find satisfaction. A life of vice is a life of inconsistency. It is a life that is not in accord with reason, and man's higher nature revolts against it. A virtuous life produces a sense of harmony in our soul, and establishes harmony between ourselves and others in this world. So a virtuous life will lead us on towards perfection, which we may ever approach, but never reach. Thus Idealists say.

Though we have stated very briefly the views of some of the important schools of ethical thought, and hinted at some criticisms that are usually levelled against them, yet, on a reflection, you will find that some aspect of truth or other has been presented by every one of them. None of them is wholly wrong. Those who are of opinion that morality consists in conformity to customs or laws, are right in this respect that in a well-ordered society, most, though not all, of the customs are right. An ordinary man can do best by following them, till by doing so he gets a higher view of things, and then he may try to improve those customs and laws. All the civilized nations of the world have some laws and customs that embody some of the universally valid moral principles. That theft, adultery, lying, and other crimes are wrong, is acknowledged by all civilized men, and their laws and public opinion punish those that violate these restrictions of morality. Conformity to such laws and public opinion will always be regarded as good. But in every society, there are other unimportant customs which it may be good to follow so long as better customs are not brought forward for displacing them. Then, those who hold that in conscience we can find a sure guide of conduct, are correct in this respect, that a refined moral conscience need not refer to any ethical standard on every occasion for the performance of a virtuous deed, but may instinctively follow its own inclination. Those who think that happiness should be the guiding-principle, put forward this truth, that a life of virtue brings happiness in its wake. ("Pleasure is the companion of virture, but should not be its aim"). Evolutionists and Idealists are justified in looking forward to Perfection as the goal of our moral endeavours, though each school explains the term Perfection in its own way.

Having thus learnt the views of some of the schools of thought on morals, let us now enquire what Vedanta has to say on the subject, what is the aim it holds before us as fit to be realised in our conduct in daily life, the aim that will supply us with a standard—a guiding-light to prevent our erring steps from running into moral degradation. Vedantic system of ethics is based upon Vedantic metaphysics, and the one cannot be dissociated from the other. According to our ancient scriptures, the Upanishads, the aim of our spiritual efforts should be the knowledge of the Truth—the knowledge of the Ultimate Principle from which all things in this universe have come into existence, and of the relationship existing between man's self and this principle, and of that existing between one man and another. But, remember, knowledge, according to our philosophy, does not mean mere intellectual apprehension of the Truth defined above. It means realisation, the assimilation of knowledge into our mental nature in such a way that we may always live and act in the light of such knowledge. Not only Truth should enrich our heads, but transform our hearts. Under its light, right feelings should ever spring from our hearts, and right activity restrain and rule over the members of our bodies.

Socrates said, Virtue lies in the attainment of wisdom. Aristotle said, It lies in the formation of good habits. According to Vedanta, it lies in changing our view-point of life. To know in the true sense, one not only should think rightly and feel rightly, but act rightly under the influence of right thoughts and right feelings.

Vedanta says, behind all the shifting scenes of this universe, behind the vast variety of objects that strike our senses, behind the sun, the moon, the stars, and multitudinuos things in the heavens and the earth, behind human beings and all living creatures, there is one Eternal Principle—God. Though all things in nature are in perpetual motion, yet He stands moveless. By a mysterious process, which the finite intellect of man cannot comprehend, the Divine Being has thrown out this ever-changing universe with its countless objects, great and small, producing sublime and beautiful slights by their perpetual movement. But behind them all, behind minute micro-organisms, infinitesimal atoms, and gigantic stars whose distance and mass our minds falter to measure, behind all things, He dwells in His ineffable glory. There is nothing in this world, however small, that is deprived of his Presence. All human beings are partakers of His glory. In the king and the peasant, in the saint and the sinner, in the high and the low, He dwells without any distinction. Him if a man knows, and lives in the light of such knowledge, he attains Perfection. Realisation of this Unity in the variety of this universe is the aim of our life pointed out to us by Vedanta.

When a man desirous of climbing a hill starts from its base by a devious path, and struggles up to reach the top, he gains view-points different at different stages of his ascent. At the foot of the hill, he sees various buildings of different sizes—mansions of the rich and the cottages of the poor—various trees, plants, and objects distinct from one another. As he rises up, the distinctions of things seem to lose their marked nature. Engaged as he is with the labour of climbing, he does not stop to note it. Upwards he pushes, working step by step against the attraction of the earth, and unmindful of the roughness of the way, till he approaches the summit of the hill, when cool breezes begin to touch his temples and remove the heat of his exertion. He feels a fore-taste of the joy that awaits him. And then, with a final struggle, when he reaches the highest point, what a glorious vision bursts upon his view! The whole landscape, he sweeps with his eyes. Behold! The ugly distinctions, the unseemly inequalities he noted in things when he started, are no longer there. The palace of the prince has dwindled into the same size as the cottage of the poor; the lordly trees have woven a common carpet of green with the lowly grass of the fields. What a glorious sight it is to see them all one from a great height! Even so, when a man advances in virtuous life, he gains newer and newer view-points. He does not perceive the artificial inequalities of men —inequalities which the selfish delights to dwell upon, and which beget diversity of sins and sorrows in our lives—so much as before. Bent upon realising the Supreme One dwelling behind all, he marches up till he attains the highest view-point of life. He then gains a new vision,—he sees the universe irradiated with a new light. No longer he perceives any difference between man and man. He looks with an equal eye on all and behaves accordingly, for he sees God in all. "He who is wise looks with an equal eye upon the learned Brahmin and the (down-trodden) Pariah, upon the (noble) elephant, the (useful) cow, and the (despised) dog." He realises in a deep sense the meaning of the well-known line of Burns, "The rank is but the guinea stamp; the man is the gowd for a' that." He sees divine presence not only in all his fellow-men, but feels it in his own soul. "One God dwells in all creatures; He is the inmost Self of all." From the perception of the Divine one in the Many comes to him that blessedness which is an unfailing accompaniment of the attainment of Perfection. Conduct that takes us nearer to the realization of this Supreme Unity is good, and conduct that takes us away from it is bad.

In order that we may advance towards the realization of the presence of the One in the Many and attain the view-point of wisdom in which all unequal distinctions will disappear from our view, we should try to lose sight of those distinctions from now. The idea of 'Equality' of men should be influencing our conduct at all times. No man can get light by courting darkness, nor cleanse his body by washing it with foul water. To realise the idea of Equality we should try to forget all artificial inequalities of men as much as we can. Our hearts should not be vitiated by the superficial distinctions of body, mind, and senses, and accidental circumstances. One man is rich and another poor. Is the former on this account really greater than the latter ? His wealth may be greater than the wealth of the other. The rich and the poor are equally great in the possession of the Supreme Spirit. One man is born in a noble family, another comes from plebian parents. Can we say that the first is really nobler than the second ? Nobility is an accidental circumstance ; it can neither enhance nor decrease the value of the soul of man. One man is learned, and another is a fool. The learning of the learned does not elevate him *absolutely* above his foolish neighbour. His learning is due to the impression of certain ideas, certain marks, upon his cerebral centres. Can they make him absolutely different from the man whose brain does not contain them ? What is the value of wealth, birth, power, and advantages of external circumstances compared with the Priceless Possession which the rich and the poor, the aristocrat and the plebian, the Brahmin and the Pariah, the learned and the ignorant, the powerful and the weak have in common ? Let me give you an illustration.

Let us suppose that two persons, walking unawares through a diamond mine, pick up by chance two very large pieces of diamond, like the Kohinoor, and bring them to their homes. Pressed by necessity, one of them shows his precious gem to a banker, and the banker, considering him to be an immensely rich man, advances him, on trust, a few thousands of rupees. Getting this amount of money, he buys a pair of horses and a carriage and other articles of luxury. He dresses neatly and drives in his carriage through the streets

People look up to him as a rich man and honour him. The other man, who has an equally valuable diamond, does not show it to anybody, but keeps it concealed under the ground in a corner of his room. He is looked down as poor by the common herd. But, if a jeweller, who knows the value of diamonds, especially, of such fine big specimens as the Kohinoor, comes to know that both the persons possess gems of equal size immensely valuable, will he say that the man with horses and carriage is really richer than the other ? What is the price of horses and carriage and other appendages of luxury compared with the almost unimaginable price of large diamonds ? He will say that both are equally rich. Even so what wise man will say that there is an essential distinction between one man and another, when he knows full well that all possess equally the same diamond-like Divinity in their bosoms ?

Any small or large quantity when multiplied by Infinity becomes Infinity. $\alpha \times \infty = \beta \times \infty$, however much α may be greater than β. So also is the algebra of a wise man.

Whenever you forget the Infinite and Immanent God who dwells equally in all, you see distinctions and make much of them. Fix your gaze upon the Glorious Infinite flashing through all, learn to value Him and love Him, and you will neither in your ignorance think yourselves superior to others, nor in your insolence despise them for their untoward circumstances. Convinced of the Divine Presence in all and drawn by Divine glory, you will extend your hand of sympathy to all your fellowmen, saying, "Brothers, we are one in the Lord". And, the more you will do so, the more the knowledge of the Supreme Unity will grow in you, till it reaches its culmination in the realisation of God in your own soul.

So, in order that you may grow great in moral life, in order that you may steadily advance towards the goal of your life on earth, you should always act on the principle of Equality. Behave equally towards all ; make no distinction between man and man ; know every man to be an immensely valuable person, as in him dwells the Highest ; treat him with honour ; love him deeply from your heart ; and always feel your oneness with him. Distinction between man and man is like distinction between portions of space created by imaginary lines, though space is one and undivided. One indivisible God dwells in all men, so differences between them are artificial. Try to obliterate from your mind false impressions from them. Feel your unity with all men and be one with them in your life. Let Equality be the motto of your conduct, and the realisation of the Supreme Unity, the aim of your life.

I hear, in my imagination, impatient critical voices crying out : Hold ! Hold ! Does Vedanta teach absolute equality of one man with another ? Does it then teach something which contradicts the common sense of mankind, and which, if followed, will sap the very foundations of society ? Does it induce us to rise against moral order by making ourselves blind to justice ? How can we act on the principle of Equality, behave in the same way towards the laborious and the lazy, the unruly and the orderly, the virtuous and the miscreant ? Shall we be true to God and the sense of justice implanted in us by Him, if we guide ourselves by the idea of Equality in our behaviour towards the honest and the dishonest, the slothful and the industrious ? If we follow the Vedantic principle of Equality, the stability of our social structure will be gone, the incentive to virtuous life will be taken away, and vice, not finding any rebuff or punishment, will spread in triumph on all sides, and moral chaos will reign over the ruins of the existing well-ordered society.

Not so, my dear friends, not so. Vedanta never tells you to obliterate natural and moral distinctions ; Vedanta never teaches you to revolt against Justice, and thus upset the moral order. On the other hand, it gives you a clearer notion of justice, and insists upon your acting on it at all times. It paves the way for the establishment of a better order in society than it reigns at the present day.

What is Justice ?

Various learned men and philosophers have attempted at defining the nature of this virtue Volumes have been written upon it, though men have been ever inclined to be deaf to its simplest demands, hearing the whispers of self-interest. One of the oldest idea about justice is to "give every man his due." If a man labours, give him his due, the right wages of his labour—means conducive to life and its pleasures; if a man violates this simple law of life, that man should toil to live and enjoy life in this world, and spends his days in idleness, give him his due also, his wages—hardship, privation, and the miseries of a slothful life. If a man leads an honest life, give him his due—confidence, honour, love, and help in difficulties; if a man courts a life of dishonesty, give him his due also—distrust, dishonour, aversion, and punishment. Simple though the above definition is, it is intelligible and serves its purpose. A modern writer says, Justice consists in giving freedom to every man to do that which he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man. Every man should be accorded freedom to act in his own way and develop his nature, to seek for felicities and enjoy them, to labour and improve the conditions of his life, so long he does not, out of self-interest, interfere with others who may be busy in the same way as himself.

In constructing a hive, each bee, according to a well-known scientist, tries to construct a circular cell in the wax, but on account of the proximity of similar cells of other bees, the sweep of its circle undergoes limitation. So, pressed by necessity, the cell of each bee takes the shape of a hexagon instead of a circle. Similarly, no man can enjoy absolute liberty to do as he pleases in human society; his activities cannot but be restricted to a certain extent on account of his association with other men. But within his own sphere, he is free; none should encroach upon his freedom, nor arbitrarily restrict its limits. I can, for instance, read, write, think, or pray in my own way. It would be an act of injustice on the part of any man if he were to force me not to do so, but read, write, think, or pray according to his directions.

So analysing the notion of justice in the light of these definitions, we get two ideas from it, *viz.*, equality and inequality—equality of men in the enjoyment of freedom to act in their own spheres, and inequality of rewards, if their deserts are unequal. Though Vedanta emphasises upon the idea of Equality, yet it does not refuse to recognise some form of inequality of men. As its principal metaphysical doctrine is "Unity in Variety," so its chief ethical ideal is the realization of "Equality in the Inequalities of men." Granting that a man, so long as he has not attained the summit of spiritual development, will perceive inequalities of men, Vedanta advises him not to recognise any other kind of inequality except what is self-created. If a man lives an idle life, or turns himself into a thief, he cannot expect to be treated in the same manner as a laborious or an honest man. This inequality of his from others, he himself has engendered, and none is responsible for it. But if he is arbitrarily prevented from reading any particular book, or worshipping in the way he desires; if he is forbidden on penalty to develop his character along lines he thinks best, though his efforts at self-development do not interfere with others' development; then, inequality is imposed upon him from outside.

The spirit of Vedanta is ever against such arbitrary inequality. Vedanta teaches men neither to impose nor to recognise such inequality thrust from outside upon individuals. It ever urges men to be free from all false ideas of inequality based upon artificial and adventitious differences of men and set up by self-interested men for achieving their own ends. Forget, drive out such ideas of inequality ; they will vitiate your hearts and prevent them from attaining their best growth.

Though Vedanta recognises this self-created inequality, this difference between man and man, which the sense of justice of men countenances, yet it advises men to rise, as much as they can, above all notions of inequality, and act on the principle of Equality. It tells you to search into the root of all forms of inequality, to learn their real nature, and remove them if possible. For the idea of justice, which most men have, and which is based upon the existing relations of human beings, may itself be imperfect. As the present society is not ideal in its nature, many of the seemingly just differences of men will turn out, on severe scrutiny, to be unjust. Men are ever inclined to accept the existing state of things and rest content in it. To question its goodness, appears to many a dangerous sacrilege. Yet, as long as there is wide-spread poverty, vice, and many glaring evils in society, no sensible man can conscientiously say that the present society is perfect, and therefore needs no betterment, and the relations that hold good among men are also what they ought to be, if they are judged in the light of highest ethical principles. On the other hand, he will, on reflection, say that there is something wrong in society, some screw or joint is misplaced in its mechanism and is marring its action and efficiency. It is only great minds that perceive social imperfections and work for their cure.

Men often ascribe the poverty, drunkenness and other vices, and the shameful ignorance of their neighbours to their Karma—their own faults; none but the victims of these evils are responsible for them. Their sad state is generally passed by unheeded by the fortunate who are ever bent on their own pleasures. Then, perchance, a great man comes and enquires into the causes of degradation of the miserable. He devises means for their removal. His noble ideas evoke responses from the hearts of a few, and these work on for the betterment of the condition of their poor neighbours. They try to bring greater comfort in their homes, to make them taste greater pleasures than what comes from the indulgence in vices, and to kindle the light of knowledge and its joys in their bosoms. These are called sympathetic men. But what is this sympathy of theirs? Is it not a higher sense of justice? Are they not trying to remove those inequalities of men which the self-satisfied members of society have regarded as inevitable? Have they not a higher vision of equality? And are they not trying to realise it by their good works? Are they not asserting by their sympathetic conduct their unity with their less fortunate brethren?

Man has an inherent tendency to do injustice to others—to assert and keep up inequality of men. It is the expression of his selfishness born of Avidya (Nescience). It is due to his wrong notion of his Ego, to his foolish thought of his being separate from others, and to his blindness to the Supreme Being in whom he and others are one. The more he shakes off selfishness from his nature, the better for him.

So though inequalities exist among men and some of them may be just, yet it is your duty to attempt at equalising these inequalities, to feel your oneness with, instead of your difference from, others, to be guided more by the idea of equality than inequality of men in your dealings with them. Sympathy you should cultivate in your nature. Sympathy should naturally arise in you out of the development of your sense of justice. Sympathy is the noble feeling that sweetens human life. Sympathy is the centripetal force that has shaped human society, and that prevents its disintegration. Sympathy is the golden key that opens to us a knowledge of ourselves and others, and in the end, bringing about in us a pure spirit, helps us to be one with the Infinite Spirit. No one that is desirous of realising the highest aim of life will accept as stereotyped the sad inequalities of men, but he will rise above them by his sympathy, and feel his oneness with the humble and the poor, the down-trodden and the degraded. By following the voice of sympathy he will reach the Supreme Good—the goal of human life.

Do you nurse with care, my friends, this noble feeling in your hearts and always act according to its dictates ? Do you always keep in your minds the idea of Equality ? And do you always, in every incident of your lives, so order your conduct, that some day you may have the glorious realisation of the One in the many—One God dwelling in others as well as in you, and thus enter into beatitude ? Pardon me for asking these questions.

Yonder farmer, toiling with his plough from sunrise to sundown and sowing the furrows of his fields with seed-grains to supply you with rice and wheat, maize and millet, and various articles conducive to your luxury, is a person standing low in the rounds of your social ladder. He has no horses and carriage, no laced turbans to bedeck his head, and no gold coins jingle in his coat-pocket. Go, visit his house, and ask his children if they go to school, or if they know how to read and write. They and their parents will, on enquiry, be found to be quite innocent of the elements of these arts. You will find the farmer himself entirely ignorant of thousand things, the knowledge of which is necessary for his calling and is conducive to his prosperity. Yet, this dull-headed child of the soil you cannot do without even for a single day. Do you feel that he too is a person, holding God in his bosom, and equally valuable as yourselves? There, on the outskirts of your village, look at the weaver bending over his work. His deft hand is busy at his loom through the long hours of day and late at night. Swiftly is his shuttle moving to clothe you in decent garments. Do you ever think and feel your oneness with him? And there, in the corner of the street, is seated the cobbler; he is sneakingly looking at your shoes to see if they require his attention, and is saluting you in the humblest manner. Do you, my friends, feel that he too is no mean creature, but an immensely valuable person, with the spark of Divinity in his soul? Do you usually, as you pass him by, speak a kind word to him? Do you regard with sympathy these and innumerable other human beings, who toil for you to keep you not only out of want, but in comfort and luxury, and who minister unto you in thousand other ways? Or do you treat them with proud indifference and never enquire into their lives,—their wants and woes? Do you think that labour, however lowly it may be, can degrade, and idleness, however sanctified by usage and extolled by its courtiers, can really elevate man? How often we see men showing themselves entirely devoid of sympathy, nay, totally blind to justice, in their attitude towards the lower classes of society. How often we meet with persons that in their superciliousness think themselves to be heaven-born, and behave meanly towards the humble poor, forgetting the great truth of the universal presence of God. Can these foolish and falsely proud men plough, sow, weave, and build their houses, and themselves do thousand other kinds of work by which these labourers serve them with their strength? Granting for argument's sake that they can do so, can they, doing all these, develop in themselves fine intellects upon which they set so much value, and which make them assert superiority over the rest ? If they cannot do so, what right have they to look down upon the labouring poor ?

Contempt for the lower classes which is widely prevalent amongst us is entirely unjust. It is against the spirit of Religion. It is revolting to the moral sense of thoughtful humanity.

Not only contempt for the lower classes, which is grown like a chronic malady in our society, demands your attention and should be removed by your efforts, thousand other forms of injustice, thousand other forms of unmerciful conduct of man towards man are crying out to you for help and amelioration. In the different parts of this country, nay, of the whole world, wherever Oppression is trampling down the rights of man, wherever Inhumanity is wounding the tender heart of Humanity, the groans of the weak and the down-trodden are loudly calling for your help. Wherever, in this world, Poverty, Drunkenness, Lewdness, Ignorance, and Disease are doing their work of destruction, there the inarticulate voice of suffering Humanity is demanding your sympathy. Up then, my friends, up. Girdle your loins and go forth to work among the lowly and the poor, the weak and the down-trodden. Bring the balm of justice and mercy to the wounds of Humanity. Bring light where there is darkness ; bring health where there is disease ; bring virtue where there is vice ; bring joy where there is sorrow. Help forward the establishment of the reign of Justice and mercy upon earth—that is godly work, doing that alone you shall see God. Away then with all prejudices, all foolish sentiments that pull you back and try to keep you in darkness. Help them whom you consider vicious and mean ; give them favourable conditions to grow ; fill them with suitable stimuli of elevating ideas ; train them up, just as you train up drooping creepers and plants ; they will grow into nobleness and virtue. Who knows, who can tell, what powers are sleeping in humble hearts ? Help them all that are in want of help—right genuine help will make manifest the Divinity in them and yourselves. Not by hatred and injustice, but by love and justice, you can advance towards the realisation of the One Eternal God who shines through the veil of this vast and various universe, your true Self, the abode of everlasting bliss.

Two are the paths lying open to you, the path of righteousness and the path of unrighteousness. The one is difficult of ascent, but leads up to the hill of Light, Joy and Life, and the other easy of descent, but leads into the valley of Darkness, Sorrow and Death. From the end of one of the paths are beckoning you to come unto them the great teachers of Humanity—the Rishis of old, Zeno, Socrates, Jesus, and a host of other godly men who lived a life of virtue and died for it ; and from the end of the other path, are alluringly calling you to follow them, the great evil-doers of humanity—liars, hypocrites, thieves, whoremongers, and the worldly-wise. Whom will you follow ? My dear friends, whom will you follow ? What path will you choose ? Choose now and delay not, while your senses are keen and your minds are in vigour, choose now while you have the power of forming a noble resolution and the strength to carry it out, the path that will bring blessings to your lives. Why do you waver ? Why do you hesitate ? Make your choice now, for none knows when the final darkness will close around you, and your power of choice will be taken away ; and then you shall have to go forth to some Unknown Region through the threatening gateway of Death. Choose, therefore, and delay not ; relegate not the work to-morrow.

Oh ! What treacheries have not our to-morrows played with us ! What disappointments have they not brought to us ! What noble resolutions have not been frustrated by them ! With the past experience of your lives, will you hesitate to make your choice ? Choose then once for ever the path of Righteousness turning your backs eternally to the other way, and go forth through the intricate ways of the world with your ears open to the words of masters, your eyes fascinated by the Good, and your hearts panting for the blessings of Perfect Life.

III

SELF-REALISATION.

At the dawn of day, when the sun has not risen high in the sky, many hills seen from a place situated a few miles off, look smooth and of beautiful dark blue colour. As the light of the day advances, the blue colour changes into green, as trees and shrubs that clothe their sides burst upon our view ; but when the glare of the noon-day comes, we see clearly the ugly features of the hills—dark masses of rock, nude and of uneven shapes, interspersed here and there with patches of green, and all our illusions about the shape and the colour of the hills are dispelled. Even so, many fondly cherished illusions of man have been destroyed by the advancing light of Science. There was a time, when the moon, ever beautiful in her fulness and phases, was considered by simple people as a goddess of light, at one time hiding her face with a dark veil, at another time partially opening it, and then, after a few days, entirely casting it off and looking down with her glorious countenance upon the enraptured world. She has been found by the searching eye of Science to be a cold lifeless ball careering through space. Just as it has been with the moon, so it has been with many other objects of this universe and many dearly cherished ideas of man. Though Science has dissipated many old ideas, and has brought truth and precision where there were error and exaggeration, yet it has unveiled new facts and evolved new ideas which are none the less grand and none the less beautiful, and which inspire our hearts with the same feelings as, nay, even nobler emotions than before.

There was a time when man, considering himself to be created in God's image, thought that he was the sole possessor of consciousness, memory, reason, and many other traits, which made him pre-eminently superior to all other creatures. He imagined himself to be a living being entirely different from all other living beings and possessing a peculiarly glorious nature. With the advancement of Science, he has been forced to part with many fond delusions about himself.

Rene Descartes, a French philosopher, who did a great service in furthering philosophical thought in the west, regarded animals as mere automata—self-moving machines which perform various actions when acted upon by things of the outside world. As clocks move by springs and wheels concealed beneath their surfaces, similarly, thought Descartes, animals perform various movements by the machinery of organs existing within their bodies. So, according to him, when a frog is thrown into water, it swims, not because it is conscious of the surrounding element, but because its nerves are stimulated by water—its organic mechanism is set in motion by the surrounding fluid. Some of the followers of Descartes, we hear, believing this doctrine of their master, adopted many inconsiderate methods of vivisection for the study of Anatomy and Physiology, without being moved by the groans of suffering animals ; for they considered them to be no better than " screeching clocks and breaking machines." Descartes and his followers considered man to be the sole possessor of consciousness, thought, feeling, and willing. This erroneous view of Descartes was abandoned as men came to understand better the nature of animals.

Though not holding such extreme views like Descartes and his school, yet many scientists, for a long time, considered man to be the sole possessor of intelligence—the power of inferring conclusion from any particular observation. They thought that animals are guided solely by instincts—blind impulses implanted in them by Nature which lead them to perform apparently intelligent actions. Bees build hexagonal combs, or Baya birds weave their beautiful nests, not with any knowledge of building or weaving, but under blind impulses to work in these particular ways. They will build or weave in the same way wherever they will need do so. No change can take place in their plans of work. It is man who can intelligently adopt himself to circumstances, building or doing any other work in many ways, after observing and reasoning upon the exigencies of time and place. In course of time, this view of scientists too underwent change, and animals were found to possess intelligence in common with human beings.

In newly discovered lands, men generally found animals to be devoid of the fear of man. They approached human beings very close, but when some of them were killed by cruel hands, they showed their aversion to humanity. If they were guided by mere blind impulses, could they, in any way, change their former habits? Sparrows build their nests under the eaves of dwelling-houses in a particular fashion. In towns and villages, they are never seen to build them upon trees. But naturalists met with sparrows in uninhabited islands where they built their nests upon the boughs of trees. To suit themselves to the nature of place they had changed their habits. This they could not have done, if they had no intelligence. Who does not know thousand instances of the intelligence of dogs, horses, elephants, and monkeys? They know their masters; they have ideas of property; and they have the consciousness that they are the properties of their masters; and at their master's request, will go over to dwell with and serve others. Scientists have accumulated a vast mass of facts in proof of the intelligence of animals. Though instincts are very powerful in them, yet animals are not devoid of intelligence. On the other hand, some of them possess intelligence to a considerable degree. Thus the old view, that intelligence is the prerogative of man, is exploded.

For a long time it was thought by many philosophers that to possess moral faculty is the special privilege of man. Animals are entirely free of all feelings of 'Ought' and 'Ought not,' and sentiments of similar nature. Though this, to a great extent, is true, yet animals have been shown by Evolutionists to possess moral feelings in an embryonic state. Spencer[1] quotes examples of animal conscience in his Ethics. Darwin relates the anecdote of a young monkey, who, when attacked by dogs, was heroically saved by the sympathy of an older monkey.[2] Animals show at times exceptional attachment for their masters and express grief for their death. Instances of moral sense in animals can be found in

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* 1. *Vide* H. Spencer's Principles of Ethics, Vol. II, Appendix D.

2. Darwin's Descent of man, Part I, Chap. IV.

writers on the subject, and if you talk with people who are affectionate towards domestic animals or have much to do with them, they will tell you many similar stories. All these go to disprove man's absolute claim to moral sentiments.

Then what is man's special privilege ? What is it that entirely separates him from the brute kingdom and surrounds him with a halo of glory that is exclusively his own ? Is he a highly evolved animal with merely a developed intellect having no special characteristic in it, that distinguishes it from the intellects of animals ? Or is there in his intellectual nature any peculiar trait that is not to be found in lower creatures.

Modern scientists are of opinion that self-consciousness is the great prerogative of man. Man's consciousness has this peculiar characteristic that it can turn upon itself. Man alone can think of himself. He alone can direct, when he chooses, the light of his mind upon himself, and say, "I," "I," "I am so and so." An animal's consciousness is always directed outside. It flows out and not within. An animal fears and flies away from the man that beats it, and approaches and licks the hand of him who gives it food, but it does not know itself. It is conscious of the outer world, but entirely ignorant of the inner world of its own mind. For self-consciousness can exist in a creature, only when it has complex thought, and the power of expressing that thought in language. When we think of ourselves, we inaudibly say within us that we are so and so, and thus show our capability of expressing our ideas in words. As far as our knowledge goes, no animal is known to speak any kind of articulated speech. If it had been so, man would have found a key to it, and established means of communication between himself and animals by spoken language, in the same way as he has done between men of different races.

It is a well-known doctrine of the modern Biologist that "the history of an individual is an epitome of the history of the race." If you carefully watch the various stages of development of any individual man from his conception in the mother's womb, through birth, childhood, to full manhood, you will observe him show likeness to various animals as he advances in life. By the process of Evolution of animal life which has gone and is going on over the face of the earth, the human race has come as its last inflorescence. Human beings form the acme of Evolution of which lower animals are subordinate steps. Man, whom we consider as the lord set over the lower animals of the earth, has sprung from them. Man, in his individual development, acts in miniature the evolving process through which animal life has passed on earth to produce him and make him dominant over the living world. Not only he shows likeness of appearance to various lower animals in the mother's womb, but, once out of it, when he draws the breath of life on earth, he does not immediately manifest signs of self-consciousness—his highest prerogative. In his early childhood, before he is about three years old and has learned to lisp, his consciousness, like that of animals, is directed outwards. It is then busy with noting the colours and shapes, and the bearings of the objects of the outside world, but has not learnt as yet to turn back upon itself. If you observe the mental development of a child carefully, you will see it first learn such simple words, as, "Ma" and "Pa." Then, after a few weeks, as its faculties open more, it learns to speak of itself in the third person, and say such short sentences, as, "Ma loves Ram." Then, after a very short time, when the child's system has often come in sharp contact with the surrounding objects, when it has fallen down and felt pain, when it has bitten its own hand and suffered from the bite, the light of its mind is beat back upon itself, and a new world is opened to it. It now becomes conscious of itself ; it comes by its greatest possession. No longer it speaks of itself in the third person, but asserts itself, as, "I," "I." It now says give *me* this ; give *me* that. Self-consciousness, the greatest prerogative of man, thus comes to him.

If you were to look back in imagination, through the dim vistas of past, to those old old days when men were more like anthropoid apes, when they had no other means of mutual communication than simple sounds, expressing vaguely love, hatred, anger, fear, joy, and sorrow, you would find them struggling their utmost to bring greater definiteness to those sounds and produce in them modulation and differentiation to stand for such simple thoughts and feelings as they possessed. As they proceeded with their endeavours at expression, their organs for the emission of sound became more and more perfect, and slowly grew fit for the utterance of articulated speech. The moment they learnt the use of language, they got a new instrument which made their thoughts immensely complex. As in the hands of a mathematician, algebric symbols do away with the tedious arithmetical mode of calculation and facilitate the solution of many complicated problems which are difficult to deal with by Arithmetic, so when man learnt the use of words, the difficulties of his mind to form complex ideas disappeared. He gave names to classes of objects; he formed propositions to assert or deny qualities to those classes; thus his thought mounted up to complexity. When thought became intricate, man's mind was directed within. He became conscious of his own self. A new characteristic came to him; a new light dawned upon his soul.

As self-consciousness is the greatest prerogative of man, so only he can ask such questions, as, "Who am I?" "Whither am I going?" etc. No animal can do this. And it is by asking such questions and finding out their answers, and living in accordance with such answers that he can fulfill the end of his existence on earth. Not by plunging himself in ignorance of his true nature into the various affairs of his life, not by leading a life of thoughtless satisfaction in the enjoyment of the pleasant things of this world, he can be true to his nature. He should make the greatest use of his distinctive privilege; he should know himself fully. Let us then study man's nature a little more closely, and see what other facts are revealed, what more light is thrown thereby on the duties of his life.

The first thing that we learn on a close inspection of man's nature is that he is a social being. He lives in society and has need of it. Aristotle said, "He who is unable to live in society or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a God." It is hard to find any man who can do, without society. Every man not only instinctively craves for the company of other men, but his life is inseparably bound with their lives. He is a member of the social organism, or a cell in the assemblage of cells which have woven the social tissue. Not an isolated creature he is, like a drop of viscous oil in a pool of water, but he is a part of society with infinite relations connecting him with his fellowmen. His good actions shed their beneficial influence upon even remote persons on earth. The shocks of his wicked deeds vibrate through the distant parts of society. Let a man deceive another of his property and reduce him to a state of poverty, his cruel criminal act will cause almost unimaginable injuries to himself and others. By doing this act, he will weaken his already feeble conscience ; he will pave the way to further crime for himself ; he will, by lowering the moral tone of his family, make his children and relations, who look up to him for example and guidance, criminally disposed ; nay, some of them, falling into evil circumstances and not exercising self-control, may turn themselves actually into thieves, robbers, and adulterers, and thus, in their turn, becoming independent sources of corruption, may spread it like poison all around. And the person who suffered from his deception, may not be able, on account of his sudden poverty, to fulfill perfectly his duties—duties as a parent, as a husband, as a honorable member of society, and in thousand other ways. His children may not be able to get that intellectual and moral education, which they would have had if he had been in good circumstances. Some of them, getting into wicked ways, may leave their homes and go to distant lands to multiply their own evil deeds, and entangle others in their meshes. Thus, the single wicked act of any man affects by its ramified effects a multitude of men in a million of ways. In the same way, his good action brings its healing and elevating force to bear upon the lives of countless persons. Again, if we take into consideration the industrial and other relations by which he is connected with others, if we think how he is dependent for his comfort and luxury on the products of art, science, and manufacture for which others have toiled, we feel his unitedness with his fellowmen all the more. So every man is bound by innumerable ties with other men, with other members of society. Nay, he is a product of society. His natural gifts, his education, his thoughts, and sentiments are greatly moulded by it.

The character of a man is produced by two factors, *viz.* 'Nature' and 'Nurture.' By 'Nature,' I mean all those natural aptitudes with which he comes into the world, the mental capital with which he starts on his life on earth. All men are not naturally endowed in the same way at their birth. Some are born with a natural taste for poetry; some, for painting; some, for music; some find it easy to learn a foreign language; to some the difficulties of a tongue other than their own are insurmountable. The sum total of all such inborn traits I call 'Nature.' Then, from the moment he draws his first breath on earth to the close of his life, he is acted on by educational influences from all sides. All these I call by the common name of 'Nurture.'

If you try to trace the origin of 'Nature,' you will find that every man receives it from incalculable sources. Directly, he inherits it from his two parents, and indirectly, from some more or less remote ancestors by atavism. Those two parents, the direct causes of his many mental characteristics, get their 'Nature,' of which they have transmitted a portion, from four other parents. Those four, in their turn, receive it from eight parents, and so on upwards. Thus the natural aptitudes with which a man enters into life, his mental equipment as he commences the race of life, will, on enquiry, be found to be inheritances coming down in countless obscure ramifying streams and uniting to form a complex effect. If you try to discover, in the same way, the sources of 'Nurture'—the educational forces which mould the character of a man—you will be lost in a bewildering maze of channels through which pour down influences that act on countless points of his life. He is educated directly or indirectly by numberless persons. He learns from how many quarters no one can tell. As a child, he learns many things from his mother, from his nurse, and from those lovers of children who fondle him upon their arms. As a boy, he learns thousand things, good and evil, from teachers, books, school-fellows, and men of the street. Ask a boy that is mending a bad rent in his coat with thread and needle, whence he has learnt that crude method of sewing, he will probably tell you, from his sister. Try to find out from where his sister has got her art. She will point out the school-mistress. The school-mistress may have received her knowledge from a tailor, and that tailor from dozen other tailors, and they from how many sources, no one can tell. Thus the boy, in this simple matter of sewing, is a debtor to innumerable persons. If we consider the multitude of things, a man usually learns to live and work in this world, his life will appear a long story of indebtedness—indebtedness not to one or two members of society, but to the whole of it. Can he live, speak, work, and enjoy the blessings of life but for other members of society? Could any man achieve those wonderful conquests over the forces of nature by which he has made them slaves ministering unto his comfort but for other members of society who had worked before and along with him? Could he form high ideas of human destiny, various schemes for the mental and moral development of humanity but for brother-toilers in the same fields ? His ideas and sentiments about literature, science, art, religion, and morals are greatly determined by the Spirit of the Age in which he lives. His apparent freedom to think and act in his own way will, on examination, turn out to be unconscious bondage to the thoughts and ideas that are in the air in his times. No man can boast of absolute originality ; none of absolute independence, and entire dissociation from the rest of humanity. Every man is like a leaf that has budded forth from a branch of society. And as a healthy leaf, deriving its life from the tree, helps in its turn its growth by drawing down nutriment from the air, so every human being, owing the blessings of life to society, should further its development toward perfection as best as he can. Not by self-seeking separation from, but by unselfish union with the rest of mankind, not by the unjust doing of injury, but by the loving stretching-forth of the helping hand to others, he can be true to his function in society. To make the just use of his greatest prerogative, self-consciousness, he should feel his unity with all other men in this world ; he should, in sympathy, feel for their woes and try to relieve them as if they were his own. He should feel in their material improvement his own improvement, in their happiness, his own happiness, in their perfection, the perfection of his own soul. And pride, prejudice, envy, hatred, and all the evil throng that turn men into beasts, he should banish entirely for ever from his mind. These are some of the ideas which legitimately follow from the right view of self-consciousness which has been declared by Modern Science to be the highest prerogative of man.

Let us now listen to what our ancient philosophers had to say on the same subject. There is an old sanskrit verse which says :

> " *Ahara Nidrâ bhaya maithunancha*
> *Sâmanya metat pashuvirnarânam*
> *Jnanam narânamadhiko vishesho*
> *Jnânena hinâh pashubhih Samânah.*"

" Assimilation of food, sleep, fear, and sexual appetite men have in common with the lower animals, but Jnanam (knowledge) is their distinctive privilege. Men without Jnanam are no better than beasts." By the word Jnanam, what did the writer of the verse mean? Did he mean mere consciousness of the outside world? Do not animals possess that common characteristic? Whatever some modern philosophers may have thought about animals being mere machines, our old philosophers never erred there, but ever assigned intelligence to them. By the word Jnanam in the verse I have quoted, they meant the knowledge of good and evil, especially, the knowledge of the real nature of one's self. Not that man comes with the knowledge of the real nature of himself into this world, or happens to possess it at his birth, but the potentiality of realising it sleeps in him. Mark, I say, the real nature of himself. For every man is, in one sense, conscious of his own self. If you tell him that he does not know himself it will appear to him absurd. Yet it is a fact that he does not know what he really is. False views about his Self have incrusted over his mind. He always thinks of himself wrongly. He sees himself darkly through the veil of Ignorance. He may know that he is the son of such rich parents, the husband of such a beautiful wife, the father of rosy children, the eldest of brothers who are all well-known members of society; that he is stout or lean, beautiful or ugly in appearance, six feet in height, and a strong man capable of wrestling with the strongest in the land; that he has in a bank a sum of six figures; that he holds a high position in his office, and is honored for his erudition by all people. All these and hundred such ideas which go to form the complex notion of his Self are false; they do not touch even the fringe of reality. For what are these ideas? Whence do they come? Are not all these ideas descriptive of his physical body and things connected therewith? Or at best, are they not true merely of his intellect and intellectual acquirements? Do not these ideas originate from his view that he is identical with his body and intellect, and that the physical and intellectual characteristics *actually* belong to his Self? This llusory view of Self is to be found in almost all men. But, says Vedanta, you are not the body, you are not the aggregate of senses, you are not the mind even, but you are Atma. So according to our oldest scriptures, you are consciousness pure and simple divested of all its apparent characteristics. Within you, joys and sorrows may pass and repass, ideas and thoughts may flower forth from moment to moment. All these owe their origin to your mind. Your mind seems to send them forth like scintillations. But the light that shines in them, the consciousness that gives vividity to them, is not their own. They are like spangles sparkling in borrowed light. The light of your mind comes from Atma, from your true Self. Your Self—the Abode of the Light of Consciousness—is shining through your mind, senses, and body, and so they are instinct with life and are fitted to receive impressions from the outside world. Without your Self, your body would be inert, your senses incapable, and your mind blind. Without the light of consciousness, which is the very nature of your Self, there would not be in you any perception of the glories of the sunrise and the sunset; the music of birds would not fill you with joy; the sweet flowers and fruits of the earth would remain untasted by you; the pleasant breezes would not cheer you at any time; and the exquisite pleasure that arises from the flight of the mind in high-soaring thought would never be experienced by you.

But, my friends, you may be involuntarily asking yourselves, if Atma or Self is the fountain-head of consciousness, if the consciousness of the mind is but a borrowed or induced quality, are there as many Atmas as there are individual men or living creatures? If it be so, how are the Atmas of different individuals related?

Vedanta denies the multiplicity of selves. "He who sees variety or multiplicity in the Self goes through death again and again." He who thinks that there are really many selves is still groping in the darkness of Nescience. There is only one infinite Source of Consciousness, God. He, the infinite store-house of the energy of consciousness, is flashing in millions of human and other brains. Wherever there is consciousness, be it in the minute micro-organism or be it in the brain of a man of genius, it is His power, His light. He permeates all things with His presence. Even in the remotest verge of space, far far beyond the stars from which light comes in centuries, He reigns in His glory. In all human beings, in the king and the peasant, in the high-born and the low-born, he dwelleth without partiality. What are these individual selves appearing different to the view of the ignorant man but mere reflections, mere shadows, of the Supreme Being. As the glorious orb of day seem many from the reflection of its light upon the waves and ripples that dance upon a lake, or the infinite sky that spreads over our heads appears as different patches of blue seen through different pools of water, even so the Infinite God, the Source and Origin of consciousness, appears as many individual souls seen through the media of many minds. By ascribing to Him who is shining through us, petty ideas which our petty minds have got through their association with our physical bodies and senses, and their frequent contact with the objects of the outside world—petty ideas of learning, wealth, rank, honour, strength, health, and thousand other things, which are different in different individuals—we are creating our notions of separate personalities.

Forgetting Him, from whom we derive our life, the light of our mind, blinding ourselves to His eternal presence manifesting through all of us, we are thinking ourselves different from one another; independent beings unlinked by any ties; free individuals free to seek our own pleasures and crush down one another in unrestrained competition, when our interests clash. False, absolutely false view it is of individual self springing from ignorance! Let us gaze up; let us divert our attention from our bodies, minds, and senses, and look up to the Infinite God, the Origin of our Existence; let us feel that in Him "we live, move, and have our being"; let us realise the Eternal Golden Thread of Divine Presence that binds us together; let us bring back to our minds that we are but shadows, and He is the Substance; He is our true Self, in Him we are all one; and all our foolish false notions of separate Existence will vanish away. We have only one Self, one Life, and we share its blessings in unbreakable union. We have only one beginning, one resting-place, and one end. We drink from only one Font of joy. We cannot flee from one another. We are not separate, but one—one in God who is our real Self.

This view point of life, we should occupy, this Universal Self we should realise, and that we can do so if we desire, is our highest prerogative.

To realise Our true Self, we should cast off all ideas born of ignorance and seek for that light in which we shall find and abide in Him for ever.

A man's character is known from the circle of his desires. Tell me what he desires, what are his habitual modes of thought and action, and I will tell you what he is. If he desires for his own happiness only, or for the happiness of those with whom he is closely related; if he, in his selfishness, feels no scruple in uttering or acting lies for deceiving others and winning his end; if passion for pleasure inclines him to incest and all manner of evil deeds; then I understand that he is sinking deep in the mire of ignorance, that he is calling in his mind the reign of profound darkness which will prevert and incapacitate it from enjoying its highest privilege. In him are seen the signs of degeneracy—the revival of the brutal traits sent down from remote savage life. Though human in shape, dressed in a decent style, and honored and highly spoken of by the worldly crowd; though holding high rank in society and exercising influence over thousands of men; yet such a man is not far removed from the beast. The divine light shines not through his soul. But the man who struggles from day to day against the evil impulses of his nature, who fights against selfishness, lying, adulterous inclination, envy, hatred, jealousy, and all the Devil's brood, who cultivates sympathy in nature, advances in steady march towards Typical Manhood. In him the Divine Light dawns more and more. The dark mists which have gathered upon his soul from remote times melt away before the manifesting Sun of Divinity.

He slowly grows perfect—the false view of Self, from which arise selfishness and sin, gradually gives place to the true view of Self, and purity and universal love establish their permanent domain over his heart. Such a perfected man cares least for himself, most for others; his life is a story of perpetual self-sacrifice. He lives for others, feels for others, and works for others. His touch is like the touch of spring making men grow into the verdure of moral life. He, like the sun, utilises the resources of the world to give them back thousandfold in return. And as he becomes perfectly conscious of his true Self, the All-present One in whom lives all, his mind finds its rest in inexplicable bliss for ever. Through selflessness and not self-seeking, he gains self-realisation. By his love and feeling of oneness with them, and not by brooding over his separateness from and disunion with others, he makes the glorious achievement. Oh ! when will all of us realise the greatness of unselfish life ! When will come home to us its benefits and joys !

There are some corrupt minds that think that to try to attain a life of perfect unselfishness is folly; that such a life would bring ruin to a man. Argue these wiseacres, if all were to become unselfish, human society would fall into pieces. As selfishness, the main incentive for individuals to work would be gone, none would do anything, and so the limbs of society would be paralysed and soon death would come to it as its inevitable end.

To these wrongly disposed men I say, go and see the working of a large mill. When you step into the huge building where the multitudinous hands of machinery are performing various works, be not confused by the noise caused by din of machines mingling with the hum of human voices, but observe closely, and try to understand how the iron giants labour under man's guidance. Enter into the room where the engine is incessantly pulling and pushing its strong arm and moving a wheel; observe how the wheel united by a leathern band with another of larger make is making it revolve with a frightful velocity; how its rigid axis stretched out through the whole of the building is imparting its mighty motion by other bands and straps to different subordinate machines in which wheels, hammers, presses, and other devices are doing their respective works; how raw material entering at one end of the mill is coming out as finished manufactured article at the other end. Could all this be, if the different parts of the mill did not work in mutual harmony and union? If the screws did not bind, wheels did not move, and hammers did not give blows, and the iron piston of the engine stopped its movement? If they, like selfish human beings, quarrelled with one another and refused to work in mutual help, what would come out of the mill? Or why should you go to a mill to see the principle of love and mutual union illustrated. Study your own physical frame—complicated living machine as it is. The right hand toils to earn a morsel of food. It labours in lifting it up to the mouth. The moment it gets there, the teeth set themselves to work; they tear, cut and grind it down into powder, while saliva pours from all sides to soften it into a pulpy mass, which goes down into the stomach. The stomach then begins its churning movement. Its coat throws down gastric juice to make the particles of food soluble and assimilated as far as practicable. Then, out opens the gateway of the *pylorus,* to allow the entry of indigested food into the intestines. The pancreas and the liver then give their exudations to further the process of digestion. The dissolved food is drawn in and poured into the veins. The veins conduct away the crude blood into the lungs. There it undergoes purification—its dark color changes into ruby red. The ruddy vitalising liquid then comes into the heart, and from there, the central pumping station of the human frame, it is propelled in its course through arteries and capillaries. The river of life now flows on feeding and recouping various organs—muscles, nerves, etc., are renovated by its healing touch. And it comes in time to feed and strengthen the very hand that toiled for the benefit of the mouth, the benefit of the stomach, and the benefit of diverse other organs of the body. Has the hand been a looser by its self-sacrifice ? Has not the whole frame been made healthy and strong by its labour ?

No, my friends, human society will not go to ruin if all become unselfish, all be helpful to one another. It will like a healthy living frame grow healthier, holier, and more perfect through mutual help and union. Its members will keenly feel the joy of such perfected life. Who but the most misdirected will not eagerly wish for the attainment of such an end? Who but the most vicious will not help forward the perfection of society?

But instead of doing the proper share of work in the living organism and receiving just reward for the labour in the form of recuperation of loss, harmonious development, and strength, if any organ appropriates an undue amount of blood, without doing the proportionate amount of work; if, for instance, the stomach grows at the expense of other organs, such as the brain and nerves, to produce a bulged belly; what will be the fate of the organism? Disease and death, sooner or later. If in any human society any particular person appropriates an unjust amount of the benefits of life, he makes himself a source of social disease. Or if any particular class in it grows enormously rich at the expense of other classes which are sunk in dreadful poverty; or if any particular section enjoys an undue amount of privileges in many ways, while the rights of countless persons are trampled under foot ; if tyranny, in defiance of God's laws, makes innocence and weakness bear unmerited hardship ; then we understand that that society, in which such things take place, is diseased. Its parts are not in healthy harmonious action. It is in an unstable state of equilibrium—like a pencil standing on end ready to topple down, or like a house of cards ready to fall into pieces at the slightest breath of wind, or like the unstable chemical compound, nitrogen tri-iodide, ready to fly away into explosion. In such a society, there occur frequent outbursts of discontent, revolution, war, and finally, it comes to an end. Who can cheat the laws of Nature ? Who can defy the commands of God who speaks through these laws ?

Selfishness is the mother of all sins. It makes a man false, unjust, and cruel. It leads him to trample, in total blindness of the Highest, on the felicities of other mortals. It hardens a man in his false view of Self. It makes him oblivious of his life's duties. It is by giving up selfishness and all the evil inclinations and deeds that arise from it, that a man can grow holy, godly, and realise his true Self. It is by freeing himself from the deadly bondage of selfishness, that he can soar in the region of Light, and enjoy his highest prerogative.

At the present day, false notions of Religion have come into vogue in our society. Many are of opinion, that despite all his feelings of exclusiveness, despite his selfish indifference, nay, positive hatred for brother-members of society, a man can easily attain salvation : that if he can profess religion though he may not practise its precepts, that if he can pray with ostentation, though he may not love his neighbours, he will get a passport for entering into heaven, and when he is gone there, he will enjoy all earthly pleasures—company of dear ones, sweet dishes, and all the luxuries of the world thousand-fold multiplied, without any labour or sorrows that mar them here below. Religion, by many, is regarded as a perpetual *Zamindari* handed down by their ancestors for their benefit—a milch-cow of the fable to milk money out. With many it has become a veil for hiding their guilt and infamy, a buttress to protect their character from the pressure of public opinion. With many it is an instrument for acquiring reputation at a cheap cost. With many it is, like a fashionable dress glittering and attractive, to be put on for display in public assemblies, but put aside as useless in private life. With many again, Religion means knowledge and utterance of high-sounding words about God and the soul and the mysteries that envelope us all round.

Vâg vaikharî shabdajharî shâstra vyakhâna Kausalam.

Vaidushyam vidûshâm tadvad bhuktaye na tu muktaye.

The great Acharya Sankara says :—" Loud words falling like the water of cataracts, ingenuity in explaining the shastras, and similar displays of learning of the learned are useful for securing the pleasures of the world, but not for Mukti." Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say, learned men without piety are like kites and vultures. These birds fly very high in the sky and wheel round and round, but their eyes are always fixed upon those places where carcasses of animals are thrown. When they see any such filthy article of food, they swoop down to feast over it. Even so, such learned men may soar very high in talk of God and the higher life, but the moment, Kamini and Kanchana, objects of temptation, come before them, they stoop low and show their eagerness for enjoying them. All their love of God and the higher life vanishes away. They have false views of religion and religious life.

We cannot call a man religious who, fascinated by pleasure, turns his back upon duty; who loves enjoyments which the world offers more than God and godly life; who throttles his conscience and lends a willing ear to the voices of passions; who, will, opportunity arising, turn all men and things into instruments for his own pleasure. Such a man, by his specious talk and hypocritical display, may pass for a lover of Religion before the world, but he cannot cheat his own nature. He will, from day to day, be removed farther and farther from the blessings of Religion; deep gloom of Irreligion will settle more and more over his soul, and make him blind to the Supreme

Light, till religious life will appear to him a fiction, and religion, a curious word without any signification.

Then what is Religion ?*

Wise men, from our ancient rishis to the latest theologians of the west, have attempted at expressing pithily the ideas implied by that single word. It is not my intention to tell you now any of those definitions. But I desire to let you know a short and simple definition of that word given by a poet and learned man whose religious convictions were considered of doubtful orthodoxy by many persons of his day. It is a definition which has the merit of broadness, and so may be accepted by the liberal-minded without dispute. Mathew Arnold defined religion as "conduct touched with emotion." Though this definition may be objected to by the overscrupulous critic, yet it embodies a great truth—that religion is the expression of an aspect of the emotional life of man. When the voice of Religion is heard in his soul, it sends a peculiar thrill through his nature making him long for something high, something unattained.

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*Mimamsa Sutras says :—That by which a man is elevated more and more, and attains his highest good is called Dharma (Religion).

When a man, who is a lover of Nature, and is fond of climbing peaks and heights, looks upon a high hill looming in the sky ; when he watches the manifold light and shade pass and repass over it during the course of day ; when he sees clouds weave fantastic shapes round its head, colour it in diverse hues as they bask in the sun, or melt in showers, and perchance, paint a bow of brilliant colours playing with the rays of light ; and again, when on an exceptionally bright day, he beholds the white spire of a temple peeping out of a cluster of trees planted upon its top, his heart yearns for scaling its sides, however steep they may be, to reach the summit. With what a thrill in his heart he gazes upon the peak, and contemplates the prospect of his ascent ! To him there is a new world in that hill, an inexplicable sweetness in the air of its stop ! So when a man views with his mind's eye the highest spiritual state in which he shall find God, his real Self ; in which, bathing in His light he shall see all men and things from the highest stand-point; in which he shall see himself, his fellowmen, and all creatures resting in God and God dwelling in them; in which feeling his Eternal Oneness with other men, his heart shall well up with love for them, and all delusions of selfish isolation, hatred, jealousy, and injurious proclivities shall depart; when he contemplates that state, his heart burns with a noble desire to realise it—to discover his true Self anda bide in Him for ever. He then sets himself in all earnestness, to develop his character, to wipe away from it all taints of evil which have gathered from distant times, and nurse in it those holy feelings which issuing in holy deeds make a man worthy of attaining self-realisation. Beginning to cultivate his spiritual nature, he finds that the seeds of nescience has sent twin roots, the notions of "me" and "mine," deep down into his heart in its noxious luxurious growth. From them are fed all evil inclinations and evil deeds. They are the causes of falsehood, lust, greed, and all unrighteous propensities. They lead men to commit crimes—theft, adultery, and murder. They urge men to wage war with other men to appropriate their rightful possessions. In short, they make men unconscious of their glorious nature and oblivious of their high destiny. But how to root them out, and bring about an end to nescience which shuts from human hearts the warmth and joy of God's light ?

There are many persons who believe that God dwells in a particular place, and if they can but think of Him at times, be it however indifferently, and praise Him in sweet flattering language, they will grow highly spiritual and will have done their duties to Him, though out of selfishness they may hate and crush down their brethren under their feet, and setting aside all restrictions of morality, live in sinful ways. These ignorant men believe that if they can merely weep for God, though they remain heedless of the ignorance and sufferings of other men, they will grow godly. Vedanta condemns outright such foolish ideas. Not by selfishness and the greedy grasping of the good things of the world, saying for "me"—"me," "mine"—"mine," but by selflessness and free renunciation of pleasures for the benefit of all, not by hatred, but by love and altruistic work, one can rise in spirituality. The Vedantin believes what Leigh Hunt* has made an angel teach Abou ben Adhem that he who loves his fellowmen loves God best. By love of man, our false notions of "me" and "mine" wear away; the hold of ignorance is loosened from our hearts; and we advance towards the realisation of our oneness with the Universal Self.

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* Abou ben Adhem—may his tribe increase!—
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold.
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said:
'What writest thou?' The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered: 'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'
Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerily still; and said: 'I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellowmen.'
The angel wrote and vanished. The next night,
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

Great men are highly unselfish. They always think of others before themselves. They plunge themselves into work for the good of others, and through self-forgetfulness find the beatitude of self-realisation. They aim not even at Mukti if it comes merely for themselves.

Our Lord Sri Ramakrishna used to say : At one time four persons went to a Mahâtmâ living in a hill to receive from him the boon of immortality. They lovingly threw themselves into his service and eagerly waited for the moment when he would be pleased with them, and grant them their hearts' desire. One day, the great soul was highly pleased with them, and in his kindness, brought out and gave them four fruits, one to each, and said, "Eat of these and you shall be immortal." They were exceedingly joyous at these words. Three of them, receiving their portions, sought out some solitary nooks and commenced eating the celestial fruits. But the other went to a spur of the hill, and began to shout and call all men that were dwelling in the valley below, saying, "O my brethren ! come quickly. Here I have got the Fruit of Immortality. Come and take of it. You shall not die any more, but enjoy the blessings of everlasting life." Sri Ramakrishna used to extol the conduct of this man, and point it out as an example to be followed. It is he who shall attain immortality first. By giving to all, he shall receive it in full measure. Him we should imitate in our conduct.

And you all may know that anecdote of Acharya Ramanuja's life. He, it is said, was instructed by his Guru with a sacred mantra, and was ordered by him not to divulge it to any one ; for (so the Guru said) 'whoever would hear it would be saved.' Ramanuja disobeyed his master, and standing upon the high gateway of a temple, shouted out the sacred mantra to the crowd assembled there. And when his Guru threatened him, saying that he should be in hell for thus disobeying him, he said to him, that gladly he would go to hell, if so many would go to heaven by his disobedience. Do you not admire and honour Ramanujacharya for his great heart ?

But the first step towards self-realisation—the attainment of that spiritual height in which we shall be one with God—should be to realise our Social Self—our unity with all the followers of the great religion to which we belong. We too often lay emphasis upon minor differences of sect, caste, or customs, and forget the underlying unity. This is the sign of degraded minds steeped in Avidya. Says one of our ancient books : "Consciousness of unity is knowledge, and its opposite is ignorance." We are to learn deeply, and bring our learning into practice, that the Shivite and the Vaishnavite, the Brahmin and the Pariah, the North-Indian and the South-Indian are really One—that behind the diverse doctrines of diverse sects, the same essential cardinal principles can be found, that under the different labels of arbitrary social distinctions, the same human personality lives, and beneath differing customs, the same religious and social ideals can be discovered, and above all, from behind all men, irrespective of their sects, castes, and customs, the same Indwelling Divinity eternally shines out. Should we overlook this supreme Unity and other manifold manifestations of Oneness in all the various followers of our

Religion and quarrel over minor superficial differences ? Should we shun light and delight in darkness ; spurn Truth and fall in love with Falsehood ; shut out our eyes to God and open them wide to the ways of the world ?

We are painfully conscious of the existence among us of some persons who are so narrow-minded that they cannot join hands with any beyond their own limited circle of sect, caste, or province. Any one coming from beyond the precincts of their narrow universe is looked upon with suspicion, jealousy, and hatred by them. If they are altruistic, their altruism never overflows the charmed boundaries of sect, caste, or province. With the selfish instinct of fighting against fellowmen outside their tribes, which characterises the savage, still lingering in another form in their breasts, they quarrel over religious differences, and are actuated in their actions by caste-hatred and provincial jealousy. They may have learnt to look beyond the family circle and find interest in men and things outside it, yet they are far away from the consciousness of the grand unity of a great religious community. They have not learnt as yet the lessons of toleration. They have not as yet heard distinctly in their hearts the voice of love—love which ever expands and ever unifies till it brings about Oneness of man with God.

Again there are others (and their number is very great now) who are loud in their profession of universal brotherhood, and are willing to see their oneness with a man from the antipodes, or with a follower of a strange creed, but will look down upon a man of low caste or poor condition, though he is a brother-religionist, a worshipper of God under the same name as theirs, a follower of the same great Rishis that they follow, and a member of society, whose services are as much needful for its welfare as that of the proudest aristocrat born within its pale. Their ideas of universal brotherhood are so curious that they would stoop low before a stranger whom they honor and be gratified if they could but touch the hem of his garment, believing that there was some exceptional virtue in it, though they would regard the very touch, nay, the very sight of some moral but lowly follower of their own religion as defiling, and the subtle emanations from his body as highly detrimental to their spirituality. They, in their blindness, believe that they are thus cultivating the noble sentiment of universal love, and are thus bringing to the altar of Progress the greatest gift of the human heart. To these we feel inclined to say in the words of Jesus Christ: "Go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." I do not mean to say, that you should not love the stranger or hate the man who comes from the antipodes. Far from it. But I mean that you should first love those who are near you, and to whom you have shown hatred for centuries. Your love must grow from within; your feeling of brotherhood or unity should try to embrace always those whom you feel inclined to neglect owing to the strong bias of your education. It is a truism, though men forget it often in their actions, that nothing great can be achieved easily. It is easy to love those who are above you, or those who are standing on the same platform with you, but difficult to love those who are beneath you. But love, like a river, should flow on, in its progress to the Ocean of love, fertilising and beautifying the lives of the poor and lowly in this world.

How difficult it is to give up our old crooked notions! How difficult to break down barriers which selfishness has strongly built in our hearts! How difficult to occupy a higher point of veiw in which we shall have a better idea of ourselves, till, by our spiritual struggle, we realise fully the glory of our Divine Nature! Our old false ideas and habits cling to us with tenacity and threaten us with pain, sometimes real, but often imaginary, when we think of parting company with them. A child often cries to change old clothes. A man brought up in indolent habits finds it hard to take physical exercise, when advised by the Doctor. A long walk or the climbing of a small hill fills him with imaginary fear. His heart whispers false pleas and tries to desist him from enjoying the bracing effects of exercise. Yet forward he must push along a country road, or up he must go a hill; only then the bad humours of this body and mind can dissolve away, and he can feel the benefits of better health and cheerful spirit.

Difficult and painful though it may appear to give up our old petty prejudices and embrace new wholesome principles, difficult and painful though it may seem to you to expand in love and feel your unity with your neighbours whom instead of loving you have hated, instead of helping you have hindered in their progress, yet it must be done, if you are to develop higher life in you. A tree grows by casting off old leaves and bringing forth new umbrage. Human life goes on by assimilation and disassimilation of material particles. Wherever there is life, wherever there is energy, there is the putting off of the useless old and putting on of the useful new. In your spiritual life, you should, in the same way shake off unhealthy ideas born of ignorance, and clothing your hearts with new healthy ideas, grow beautifully in the light of God.

And why not ? Is your spiritual vitality entirely gone ? Has the blood of ancient sages dried up in your veins ? However degraded, however immersed in ignorance and misery you may be, are you not the descendants of those great men whose wisdom commanded the admiration of the heroes and philosophers of once Mighty Greece—Greece whose thoughts and ideas are still, in many ways, dominating over the western world ? Should you remain ever in helpless ignorance, hating one another, and disputing with one another about the non-essentials of religion and God—God who can be known only by peace, harmony and love ? Should you be ever seeking Him, in whom is Perfection, by delighting in Imperfection ? O say not that you cannot grow, cannot expand, cannot love, cannot feel your oneness with your brothers ! O say not that you should not try to realise God who dwells in all ? Infinite powers lie slumbering in you. Rouse them up and all your imaginary difficulties will go away.

Try to realise unity in variety. Feel deeply your oneness with the other followers of your religion. Be united in brotherly love. Behold the tall and stately trees ! How they have joined their branches in love and woven a canopy of umbrage to shelter the weary and heavy-laden. They have withstood for many many years the rage of rain, hail, and tempest, and are whispering to you as soft breezes blow through their leafy shade, "In brotherly love is strength." And look at the countless drops of rain! How they melt down from the sky and fall upon the top of the mountain, and drawn together by attraction form rills—one here trickling down over a smoothed rock overgrown with moss and ferns, another there oozing out of the soft ground covered with tangled creepers, and another there impatiently rushing out of the crevice of a jutting granite, cold and clear, and then all unite to form a stream. Observe again, how streams coming from different parts of the mountain coalesce by the same law of love and form a river, which marches on, skipping boulders and other obstacles on its way, at times going around them singing a perpetual Song of Progress. Behold! how its water when it espies a sudden precipitous descent quickens its pace, and leaps down with a loud shout throwing up smoke of spary, and then frothing, foaming, boiling, and brawling in its stony bed, runs swiftly out to dance round and round in eddies and whirlpools, and then marches onwards again, flashing the light of the sun in millions of ripples, to meet the mighty Ocean, its destination. Even so, the millions of followers of the most ancient Religion of India, coming from its different parts in different sects, should unite by the gravitation of love to form a mighty body, and march onwards overcoming all difficulties and dangers of the way—aye, you should march onwards as the very embodiment of moral strength and beauty, with your numerous hearts flashing the light of Vedantic knowledge, ever seeking, individually and socially, that Infinite Home of perfection and bliss, reaching which all the sorrows and struggles of life come to an end. This is the immediate glorious end for which you should strive, this is the aim which you should never loose sight of in your lives. You have fought over sectarian and other petty differences long enough ? It is time that you should be cognisant of the Truth and your unity.

I do not mean that the unifying work of your love will come to an end when it has united you with others within the fold of Hindu religion, but your love, having great potentiality of its own, will overflow its borders after finishing its first task to bring under its influence the followers of other creeds. As the circle of wave generated by the drop of a stone in a lake dies to give rise to another of wider range, so your love will expand and embrace the followers of other religions, and bind you in fellowship with them. For it is the inimitable glory of our Religion that it is not tainted with the precepts of intolerance. This is the religion which has declared for ever that there is one God and wise men worship Him under different names. This is the Religion whose sacred books loudly proclaim, that in whatever ways men worship God, He satisfies their desires accordingly; all men are but following different paths which ultimately lead to Him. Other religions may in a militant spirit try to crush one another out of existence, (and they in the name of piety keep up discord and ill-will which are admitted by all to be against their spirit), but the Hindu faith ever makes for peace and good-will among men. It says as if to all men desirous of tasting the sweetness of a religious life, "As there is One God, and He is omnipresent, in whatever way you may worship Him, so long as your worship is sincere, so long as you are pure in thought, word, and deed, just and merciful in your dealings with your fellowmen, you are sure to realise Him and enjoy the everlasting bliss of such realisation."

Truth is not the exclusive possession of any-one creed. It is folly to suppose a single faith to be its sole repository. As there is one common sky spreading over all lands, as there is one common aerial envelope round the earth supporting all lives, so Truth is common to all religions. Truth appears in different garments in different religions, so she cannot be recognised by the ignorant, but the searching eye of the wise discerns her everywhere. This glorious doctrine believed by all Hindus is sure to be accepted by all religious men some day. We look forward in hope to that day when religious quarrels will come to end on earth; when men in over-weening confidence will not dare assert that they have understood fully the ways of the Most High ; when religion will mean to its followers not profession but life ; when pride, hatred, and warring tendencies will die out among men, and the spirits of Love and Harmony will rule over them in glory.

When you go to hear a good band play, how you are rejoiced to listen to melodious sounds uttered by various instruments and blending in harmony—the deep-throated cornet and the shrill clarionet mingling their loud tones with the soft and sweet notes of the flute and the violin. There is no dissonance to mar the beauty of the performance. Though the timbre of each instrument is different, yet the united sounds rising in harmony fill the air as if with waves of joy. You drink the music with your ears and are lost in delight. So when the harsh clangourous notes of the dogmatic disputes of Religions will be hushed for ever; when the moral sense of humanity will no longer be offended by the sight of religious teachers working not for harmony and peace, but discord and war; when under the sway of Religion, Truth, Justice, and Mercy will build their permanent abodes in human hearts; then the prayers and preachings of different faiths will rise up in choral symphony to the glory of the Eternal One and fill all hearts with a sense of harmony, peace, and love. Then men will worship in a new spirit, read a new meaning in the sacred texts of their scriptures, and find an undreamt solace in their religious practices. Then men will be ever eager to be purer and purer in heart and action, and the perfection of society will go on harmoniously with the perfection of the individual. That long expected day shall come. Will you help forward its approach ? Will you help forward the realisation of this great end which great minds have dreamt of for centuries. Learn then to love all men. Fix your mind's eye upon the Supreme Unity that links you for ever with others. Begin by loving those who are one with you in many ways—your co-religionists,—and end by loving all men, all creatures, all the beautiful objects of Nature. Love shall cure you of selfishness and sinful thoughts and deeds ; Love shall remove ignorance from your hearts, and then you shall be conscious of your real Self—Him who dwells in the highest and the lowest, and knowing whom all doubts are dispelled, all bondages break asunder, and the peace that passeth all understanding is experienced in the soul. To realise that Self is your highest privilege.

IV

WHO CAN BE A WISE MAN ?

Wisdom or self-knowledge is regarded by us as the goal of our spiritual endeavours. By the term self-knowledge we mean not only the knowledge of one's personality, but also the knowledge of the Supreme Being from whom our personality has its existence. In other words, when a man comes to know himself and his relationship with God, he attains the consummation of his spiritual efforts. Read our ancient books, you will find in them the supreme importance of self-knowledge stated in such passages as, "*Tameva viditvâ atimerityumeti*," "*jnânâdeva amritatvam*" "Knowing Him a man attains immortality," "From self-knowledge comes immortality."

Who has attained this knowledge ? What are the signs by which we are to find him out ? What marks in his behaviour will tell us that the Supreme light has dawned upon his soul ? If we can make out what a wise man is, we may so mould our lives, so follow in his footsteps that we also may be like him some day.

Though in our sacred books there are descriptions of the ways of a wise man, say, for instance, in reply to Arjuna's question,

"*Sthitaprajnasya kâ bhâsa samâdhisthasya keshava,*
Sthitadhih kim prabhâsheta kimâsîta vrajeta kim."

"How is the wise man who has realised Samâdhi spoken of, how he talks, how he lives and how he walks," Krishna replied,

Prajahâti yadâ kâmân sarvân pârtha manogatân,
Atmanyevâtmanâ tushtah sthitaprajnastadochyate."

"When a man gives up all desires of his heart and finds satisfaction in his Self, then he is called a wise man," yet popular mind does not care much for such descriptions, but has accepted one that is more intelligible to it, I mean, "A wise man is like a child, like a mad man and like a person possessed with a spirit."* So much has the idea embodied in this description taken root in the hearts of common people, that you will find many of them mistaking a degenerate or a mad man who ought to be treated by a doctor, for a great Mahâtma. Nothing is so easy for uncultured minds as to bring about this confusion. We see often persons that laugh (probably under the fumes of Bhang) in season and out of season, or that are devoid of the sense of shame pass for wise men before common people ; or persons that dress quaintly, behave quaintly, and talk like bedlamites are regarded as great mystics by them ; or persons that beat or bite those they are angry with and behave in such a way as to make us think that some evil spirits have entered into them, evoke greater reverence from the crowd than the saintliest of men.

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* Bâlavad unmattavat pisâchavat.

Why popular mind, which though so often subject to delusions, yet so readily shakes them off, has believed in this description of a wise man ? If there had not been a grain of truth in this statement, that a wise man is like a child, like a mad man, and like one possessed with a spirit, it would have given it up as unworthy of belief long long ago. The belief would not have endured so long, but exploded some day or other.

Extremes look alike. As light intensified looks like darkness,* so a perfect mind looks like an undeveloped or a defective mind. Hence ignorant people cannot distinguish between them and so often mistake mad and degenerate men for great souls.

But there is another signification of that description of a wise man, and that is what I am going to dwell upon. As it is said that a wise man is like a child, like a man struck with lunacy, and like a person possessed with a spirit, (and there is some truth in it,) so if you wish to attain wisdom and infinite bliss which comes as its accompaniment, you also should try to be like children, like mad men, and like persons possessed with spirits. For there cannot be any discontinuity in the line of development of a man's life, any great qualitative difference between its beginning and its end. What you are going to be, you should try to be from now. In fact, the conditions for the attainment of Supreme light are such that unless you fulfill them it shall be for ever shut out from your soul.

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* Both the ultra-violet and the *infra-red* rays of the solar spectrum are invisible, though their Chemical characters are different.

So to be wise, you should first be like children.

Did not Christ say, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto Me: for of such is the kingdom of God" and "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"? So on this point, both Hindus and Christians are of the same opinion and tell you to be like children. But children in what sense?

You are to possess first those noble qualities that healthy children possess naturally, and that gradually wear away in most cases as they grow up and struggle along the hard way of of life. The world shapes them by blows and buffets after its own liking, and heaven, which 'lies about them in their infancy,' exists no more, or recedes to a great distance as they attain old age. Yet the heavenly qualities that children possess in an unconscious way, a grown-up man desirous of the development of his spiritual nature should acquire after self-conscious struggle, and when they would be thus realised, they would be all the more cherished and all the more his own.

Let us see what virtues are naturally present in children, what are the important characteristics of healthy childhood. The first characteristic of healthy childhood is

SINCERITY.

How sincere children are! Their nature is as transparent as glass or the heavens above! Their words, actions, and the expressions of their countenances, all image the thoughts and feelings that stir in their breasts. If at any time, a child utters falsehood, or practices dissimulation, it does so more in imitation of its grown-up brothers and sisters than on account of any evil motive of its own. Even then, how easy to see through its falsehood. By the transparency of its untruth, it asserts that to it truth is more natural than its opposite. Compare this sincerity with the sincerity of grown-up men. Falsehood and insincerity or hypocrisy (these are but different aspects of the same vice, for they mean nothing but non-correspondence between thoughts, words, and actions) are so common among so-called civilized men that some misguided intellects have considered them to be inevitable accompaniments of culture and civilisation. From such harmless mechanical expressions, as, "I thank you," "I am glad to see you," that a man of society gives vent to so often, without feeling any thankfulness or gladness in his heart, to the intricate business trickeries of a covetous merchant or the diplomatic juggleries of a quack politician, Hypocrisy, like a multi-form monster, is showing itself in thousand shapes in the civilised world. If you walk with your eyes open, you will see Hypocrisy in fire-sides, Hypocrisy in streets, Hypocrisy in markets and Hypocrisy, with false nods and smiles, in cultured assemblies where it is least expected to be found.

Truth is regarded by moralists as axiomatic in its nature. It does not require the support of reasoning to prove that it is good ; for, reason itself seeks for it. Even falsehood cannot exist unless supported by it. If everybody were false ! Everything untrue ! O no ! that could not be ! Falsehood imposes upon truth, because falsehood comes in truth's clothing. Truth is the strong cement that binds the arch of society. Its firmness, its glory, depends upon this virtue. But for it, how could men live, how could there be communication between man and man, sympathetic response between heart and heart in joys and sorrows ? But for it, the blessings of life would depart for ever, and man's existence would become unendurable on earth. So our scriptures say, "*satye lokâh pratishthitâhs*" "worlds stand on truth."

Truth should be practised under all circumstances ; but alas ! how few people do so ! Mark, I say, under all circumstances, advisedly. For, though I know that there are some circumstances in which a falsehood may be justifiable ; as, when watching over a sick bed, you conceal the news of the death of one that is dear to the patient, thinking that the shock of the report may send him to the grave ; or when, to save the life of an innocent man pursued by an assassin, you utter a lie, and the recording angel, out of sympathy, blots out the black mark from his book, yet these are instances that, being exceptional in their nature, lend support to the general rule. So I say, how few people practise truth under all circumstances! Virtue, in order to be worthy of the name, should be universally practised. Its practice should not be limited by any consideration of the nature of the person, place, or time, before whom, or in which it is practised. Suppose, a man is truthful before his wife or his friend, but false before a stranger; then his truthfulness is not universal, but limited by the consideration of the nature of the person. Or he utters truth in a temple for fear of offending God who is worshipped there, but outside it, he utters its contrary; in that case, his truthfulness is limited by the consideration of the nature of the place. Or he is truthful on the sabbath day, but limits the practice of the virtue when it is gone; then his truthfulness is limited by the consideration of the nature of time. But the practice of virtue should not be thus circumscribed. Our virtuous life should be as needful for us as the air we breathe in. We should not, under any circumstances, evade its restraint.

Do you, my friends, practice sincerity under all circumstances ? Do you think that it is as necessary for you as food, drink or clothing ? That any deviation from it, any want of it in your dealings with your fellow-men, produces an oppressive feeling in you in the same way as does the want of food, drink, or clothing ? Ask yourselves and answer.

We see men tell their creditors, to come to them for receiving money on a particular day, after making arrangements for not meeting with them on that day ; we see men make vain promises without even a remote intention of fulfilling them ; talk boastingly of worldly possessions when they are pinched by poverty ; make professions of piety when in their hearts they have said, "Righteous life is an impossibility" ; and avow ardent belief in God when they are atheists in action ; and seeing all these, do we not feel inclined to think that sincerity has fled away from amongst civilised men and gone to dwell on the slopes of the

Himalyas. Not only the poor who stand on the lower rungs of the social ladder show such flagrant cases of false behaviour, but many of the rich who stand on its top, are as guilty as they, and so lead them on without setting any good examples to them, or even thinking in their hearts, that the God of this world is the God of truth and not a lover of sham. Otherwise, why should we hear of some rich people paying for newspaper articles written for glorifying some insignificant acts of charity that they may have done—done rather in a true mercantile spirit to get fame or a title in return than in an unselfish way, with great sacrifice on their part ? Or why should we see many of them over-eager to get popularity by making insincere professions of loyalty to the public interest in flattering speeches, instead of leading truly good life and doing truly good deeds for the benefit of all, which alone entitles a man to love and respect ? Do all these teach high ideals of sincerity ? Sham ! Sham ! Sham ! Love of sham is trickling down from the rich to the poor, from the high to the low, from the old to the young, and the consequence is that we meet with Sham in play-grounds, Sham in school-boys' meetings, Sham in young men's associations, Sham in shops, Sham in office-rooms, and you are so surrounded by this demon that you hardly know how to deal with it. We feel as if men who came 'trailing clouds of glory' into this world have, by some mysterious process, changed them into clouds of darkness, and they are marching rapidly not to God who is their home, but to Evil which is their ruin.

Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "A man cannot walk eastward and westward at the same time." The God of truth, the God of light cannot be reached by lies and hypocrisy. Lies may lead you on to profound darkness and the Father of lies, but not to Supreme light and the God of light. To realise Him, to bathe in His glory, to feel the heavens open, and the spirit of wisdom descend upon you, you must have the courage to say to Hypocrisy, "Get thee gone Satan; I know thee not; I court thee not; I am a child of light, I seek for light; I will rather die than fall into your snares."

With courage, with a firm resolution, shake off the false view of false men, that insincerity is necessary for living in this world; stand firmly on the rock of truth—truth in thought, truth in speech, and truth in action, and you shall have the first quality of childhood which shall lead you to the light of knowledge.

The second quality which characterises healthy childhood is

CURIOSITY.

Modern psychologists have made an ideal division of the activities of the human mind into three phases, namely, Cognition, Emotion, and Volition. Though all the three phases of activity are retained by the mind as long as it preserves its healthy tone, yet, if we divide man's life into three rough divisions, that is, (1) childhood and boyhood, (2) youth, (3) manhood and the rest of life, then we may say that the cognitive aspect of mental activity predominates in man in childhood and boyhood, the emotional aspect in youth, and the volitional aspect in manhood and afterwards. In childhood and boyhood, man is curious to know all things; in youth, he is mostly guided by passions ; and in manhood and afterwards, he deliberates in the light of reason and acts according to well-determined principles.

When a child climbs up the hill of life, as its body shows its growth by the enlargement of its structure, so its mind shows its growth by curiosity—the desire for enlarging its sphere of knowledge. Observe, how curiosity manifests itself and works in a child. There, in the court-yard of a house, a child plays with its toys. It gazes up to the blue sky above and wishes to know what it is. It throws up its ball. The ball goes up and returns. It is pleased. It throws the ball a second time, and a third time, and then, not being satisfied with the experiment, it repeats it in another form by bringing some small fragile utensils from the kitchen and making them fly in the air. The little philosopher thus enquires into the nature of space. It lovingly makes its dolly walk step by step ; and then not being pleased with its walk, dashes it upon the hard pavement ; and alas ! poor dolly is broken into pieces. The child thus learns a lesson that the doll is not man. It breaks open its toy watch, and tries to find out how, by winding, its hands move. The child always makes experiments connected with statistics, dynamics, and other branches of physical science. It is always curious to study, in its own way, the nature of force, friction, the centre of gravity, and the states of equilibrium.

When the child grows into the boy, its curiosity does not abate, but goes on increasing. Have you talked freely with any boy ? Have you ever allowed him to question you in his own way ? If so, you may have noticed what difficult questions sometimes trouble the minds of boys. They ask you at times, " If there is God, why is he not seen ?"—a question which even philosophers find difficulty in answering ; or " what is a shadow ?"—the answer for which even some grown-up men may not know.

Thus curiosity or the spirit of enquiry shows itself in children as one of their prominent characteristics. If you have a desire for attaining wisdom, you also should cultivate in yourselves the spirit of enquiry or curiosity. Curiosity is the sword that can pierce through the dark veil of ignorance which obstructs your vision ; curiosity is the wedge that can break and bring down citadels of superstition and false ideas ; curiosity is the key that can open to you treasures of knowledge. If, according to Hebrew tradition, the first progenitors of mankind fell from heaven, because curiosity had led them to violate God's command, the same quality can bring you back to heaven and happiness that knows no end, if it makes you not defy, but observe unflinchingly the eternal moral principles which are the commands of Him who is the Highest.

But remember, there are two kinds of curiosity—a curiosity that is essentially base and a curiosity that is essentially noble, the one born of mental disease, and the other born of mental health, and there is as much difference between them as there is between food and its putrefaction. The noble curiosity seeks for truth and the laws of God and light ; the base curiosity is ever impelled by selfishness, sin, and darkness of the soul.

The curiosity that leads some men to enquire into the scandals of their neighbour's household, so that they may gloat on and gossip about them in market-places with extra colouring, addition, and alteration ; the curiosity that leads some men to enquire about the ways of some well-known persons, especially, if their opinions do not quite coincide with their own, for finding out some defects in their character so that they may make them butts for their obloquy, is base in its nature. The ignoble curiosity shows itself in some men in another less harmful form called idle curiosity. There are some men who, if they are made to wait in a room for a while, cannot keep quiet and derive satisfaction from observing pictures and other products of art kept there for display, but out of curiosity, begin to turn every object upside down, examine it inside and outside, read letters and other written papers kept between the pages of books or in other places, nay, even open drawers, if they have been left unlocked, to see their contents. When we see any man display ignoble curiosity in this way, we feel inclined to regard him as a specimen of humanity that brings additional evidence to the Darwin's theory of man's descent from anthropoid apes.

But the curiosity that impels a Gallileo to watch the ways of the shining lights of the sky, that causes a Le Verrier to give a new planet to the world, a Dalton to find out the weights of atoms, a blind Huber to record the habits of ants; the curiosity that philosophers nourish in their hearts and that leads them to enquire into the nature of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful; the curiosity that fires the hearts of philanthropists and reformers for investigating the causes of disease, death, and vices among men, and for discovering those divine laws whose observance shall bring about their end, is noble, essentially noble in its nature. It should be cultivated by all.

When the darkness of night slowly steals over the world after sunset, when a celestial stillness imperceptibly spreads over the earth infusing peaceful thoughts into our hearts, and the stars appear in their solemn grandeur, lift up your eyes and hearts to the infinite dome above, and ask yourselves what are those flowers of light. Again, when the moon, the queen of night, appears from behind the clouds gilding their fringes in an indescribable glow and showering rays of silver all around, ask whence she gets her splendour. And then again, in the morning, when Nature, after night's rest, wakes up with the joyous songs of birds, and the East, with the gorgeous display of flaming banners of cloud, triumphantly ushers in the God of day, ask whence He gets His powerful glory. Then try to lift up your hearts in a heavenly curiosity to that Light of lights, Father of all lights, whence the sun, the moon, and the stars, and all the great and small lights of the universe derive their luminosity. Try to find out, then, why man, wandering in the chequered way of life desires so little to know of this Supreme Light; what chronic malady eats into the vitals of his being and stifles this curiosity, and what remedy, what laws of health, when observed, shall drive the disease away, and develop in his bosom the heavenly yearning for that knowledge, before which every other knowledge is vanity and attaining which nothing more remains to be known.

The third characteristic of childhood that you ought to cultivate in your nature is

FAITH.

What great believers children are! All myths and all tales of fiction are eagerly listened to by them. They never impress children with their unreality as they do us. In the morning of the world, when men were like so many children, were not all myths created? Credulity (I do not like this word as it implies a kind of weakness of mind), rather faith, is another important trait that you should develop in yourselves. But there are different kinds of faith,—the blind faith and the enquiring faith, the irrational faith and the rational faith. No religion, unless it has been corrupted and wrongly interpreted by selfish priesthood, tells you to believe without questioning. Who can tell you to stifle the God-given spirit of enquiry in your breasts, unless he himself has walked away from the path of rectitude. Almost all of our ancient Sutras begin with the word Jijnasa or enquiry. But at the same time, the value of faith has also been extolled by our sacred scriptures. Sradhâ or faith in the teachings of sacred scriptures and great masters is one of the six treasures of virtue, *Shat sampatti* you should have in order to attain wisdom. Question by all means; question can remove only husks, allegorical expressions, and images, but the kernel of truth will remain all the same. Believe that there is a kernel of truth, try to find it, and when you have found it, hold it dear and let it nourish your soul.

One difference (and that difference is of extreme importance) between a spiritually dead and a spiritually living man—a man about whose improvement there is no hope, and a man that, however weak and given to backsliding he may be, will slowly reach perfection—is that the one does not believe in a higher life and the other intensely does so. When Christ began to preach, he gathered round him as his disciples not the learned Jews who were observing the laws of Judaism to the letter without caring for the spirit, nay, even disbelieved that there was any real good in doing so, and some of whom, believing not in God but in gold, had converted his houses into shops and allowed thieves to reign supreme in them; but the lowly fishermen of Galilee, Mary Magdalene and her sisters, etc.,

—men and women having little of worldly goods to call their own, men and women whose morality might have been questioned by the people of their day, but who had in their hearts the celestial treasure of faith in a higher life and the power of faith to give a gravitative bias to all their actions toward the realisation of that life. And Chaitanya, who appeared in Bengal about four hundred years ago, did count among his followers drunkards and persons of questionable morality, finding the spark of faith glowing in them. Faith in a higher life, faith in moral principles, enables us to overcome many sins and weaknesses of our nature.

Do you believe ? My friends, do you believe that a man can attain wisdom, attain a godly life ? Do you believe that a man can be truthful, just, and merciful ? Do you believe that a man can renounce selfishness, give up the low pleasures of life, and walk in the godly way, doing good to humanity ? Do you believe that a man can give up money and many other pleasant things of the world for realising the ideal of his life ? Ask yourselves.

I hope, you have not, like the Pharisees of Christ's time, or like the members of a nation hastening in moral depravity into the jaws of Death, said in your hearts, "Talk of higher life or righteousness is good, for it throws a halo of sanctity about us and the ignorant are deluded by it, but it is impossible to be truly righteous now-a-days". Ah! If such be the whisperings of your hearts, any amount of lustration, any number of elaborate rites at home or in temples, and gorgeous torch-light processions through streets, will not bring you nearer to Him that sees at a glance the secrets of your breasts. You may deceive fools, but by deceiving them, you deceive yourselves.

The fourth characteristic of childhood that you should cultivate in yourselves is

ADMIRATION.

The child, when it has attained sufficient intelligence, wants to be like its elder brothers and sisters. It shows eagerness for eating the same kind of food and putting on the same kind of dress as they. Observe, how the same desire manifests itself in a more marked form, when it has grown into a girl or a boy. The girl does not like the short and simple clothing proper for her age, but is impatient to be robed in amply-folded garments like her elder sisters. The boy eagerly wishes to be a man, a man in every way,—in dress, stature, gait, and knowledge. He views, in the mirror, the appearance of his moustache with joy. Even the word boy has something of the gall and wormwood to him. Do not all these show that admiration is the cause of his dissatisfaction and impatience ? If worthy objects of admiration are placed before children, if their growing minds are taught to admire heroic characters and lives, what a tremendous impulse is given towards the development of their lives! Admiration, an important characteristic of children's minds, should not be suppressed, but rightly directed and developed. It is a good quality that, like some roses, require pruning and proper support to bring forth best results. Admiration unlocks immense powers in the human mind which may be made to run in a right or a wrong channel.

There is a common proverb that a hero is not admired by his *valet de chambre.* Upon this Hegel epigrammatically remarked that a hero is not admired by a valet, not because a hero is not a hero, but because a valet is a valet. This remark of Hegel was adopted and elaborated by Goethe and Carlyle. We may say that a hero is not admired by his valet, because a valet is going to remain valet for ever. A valet that admires his master is already on the way to become a master himself. Do we not read of the lives of eminent men that were slaves, servants, or subordinates and that, by admiration, imitation, and labour, climbed up there where their masters and superiors stood? Admiration, with her uplifted gaze, whispered to them what they could, one day, aspire to be. To appreciate greatness, there must be the element of greatness in one's soul. None but those that have heard the music of poetry in their souls, can appreciate Shakespeare or other master-poets.

A poet says, "we live by hope, admiration, and love." Tell me what you admire, I shall tell you what you are, and what you are going to be.

Do you admire wise men? Do you admire the heroes of science and art? Do you admire heroic lives spent for the good of humanity? Do you admire those men that beset with thousand temptations lived unscathed lives? Do your hearts glow with admiration when you read of men that, for the sake of high principles, courted poverty, courted ignominy, nay, even death itself? Or do you admire those bad men that have no other qualification for eminence than a swollen purse—a purse filled with gold with a foul hand when the hungry cried, widows wailed, and the houseless wandered in the world shivering in cold; or those that, by perjury, bribery, and wickedness of other forms, have clambered up to the top of the social scale, from which they come down with grave airs to lead men forth to light? Tell me whom you admire; I shall tell you the trend of your lives—whither you are going; whether you are marching towards Light or Darkness, Life or Death?

The lifting power of admiration is not felt by all. It is slow in its action, but sure in its results. Silently and steadily all the other powers of the mind are subordinated to it. Granting that other virtues are necessary for the spiritual development of man, yet we must admit that admiration holds a high place in their hierarchy. But remember, there is a genuine and a spurious admiration, an admiration of the lips and an admiration of the heart, the one born of hypocrisy and the other of downright sincerity; and if you are desirous of attaining wisdom, you should cast out the one and nurture the other in your soul.

Adorned with these four virtues of sincerity, curiosity, faith, and admiration, when any man enters into the childhood of spiritual life, then his mind has to pass through a profound change, if further development is to come to it. This change, this baptism of the soul, is so far-reaching and effective upon the whole life of a man, that it has been thought to be something resembling madness. So if you are desirous of being wise, you should be like mad men, in a certain sense.

My dear friends, let not the horrors of the lunatic asylum, handcuffs and whips, bars and chains, rise up before your mind's eye.

The history of the human race shows that many great and good men were regarded as mad by their contemporaries, but posterity found them worthy of honour and worshipped. You need not therefore be so much afraid of the word madness. And remember, I said, you should be like mad men and not mad.

What is madness? A deviation from the normal way of living and doing things. A sane man puts on a coat with its seams and lining down ; a mad man, with its seams and lining up. A sane man walks along the middle of a street ; a mad man, along its edge, rubbing his body against buildings. Where a sane man laughs, a mad man weeps ; where he sees nothing, he sees heaven and hell ; where he sees light, he sees darkness. Any profound deviation in a man from the habits of others is regarded as madness by them. Still, unless you bring about a profound change in your attitude of mind ; unless you reject old ideals and adopt new ones, drown into the waters of oblivion old gods and set up new ones in their stead, abjure old creeds, and solemnly avow new creeds, there cannot be any real progress in you. All great men are non-conformists in a certain sense. The ideals, idols, and creeds of the world are not those that will lead us to Supreme Light.

There are false gods set up in this world. Innumerable are they. But one God and his worship have been decried above all others by all the great masters of humanity in most unmistakable terms. I mean, Mammon and Mammonism. So much has Mammonism penetrated the hearts of the people, so much has this evil ferment brought about corruption of the mass of society, that not only common intellectual men, but ministers of religion are affected by it. Even they fear to speak against it.

But let us hear what Jesus Christ says on this head : " A man cannot serve two masters; * * * * Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." Think over (as Ruskin tells you) why Christ, instead of bringing the name of Devil or any other false God worshipped by the ignorant in his day, brings into antithesis of God's name the name of Mammon.

Then hear what Kathopanishat, which is regarded by Hindus as a revealed book, says :—

" *Na sâmparâyah pratibhâti bâlam,*
Pramâdyantam vittamohen mûdham."

" The existence of future or higher life is not believed in by those that are deluded by the possession of wealth." Why the Upanishat did not say, instead of wealth, Kâma (desire) or any other word that could fulfill the exigency of rhyme ? And such words are of frequent occurrence in Hindu sacred books. Thus here Christ and the Upanishat are in agreement.

Of all the delusions of the world, the greatest is the delusion of wealth. If a Mammon-worshipper were to expose his heart to you, if he were to tell you sincerely what articles of faith he believes in, then he would say, " I believe in almighty gold the acquisition of which I consider to be the chief aim of my existence ; I believe that it alone has the power of conferring greatness on man ; I believe that its possession, by any means, fair or foul, to be good ; I believe that father and mother can be abandoned, nearest relatives deceived, and duty and moral principles trampled under foot for the sake of this almighty god I worship. And so believing, I walk on this world with the full confidence that I am not a solitary worshipper with a strange creed, but almost all agree with me in faith and practice." Though it may be admitted that wealth, if it means the symbol of labour, the fruit of the action of human powers, physical and mental, upon the powers of Nature, a thing acquired in obedience to God's law, that man must earn his livelihood by the sweat of his brow, is necessary for our life, yet who can say that when a man, forgetting the right use of wealth, confounding the symbol with the symbolised, courts idleness instead of labour, or gives himself to that worst form of idolatry, covetousness, that he walks on the right way ?

Yet, if you gaze around, you will see this idolatry widespread among men. So I say to reformers, preachers, and cultured men. Friends, you decry idolatry so vehemently, why are you so silent about the worship of Mammon ? Am I to understand that you too have become, in secret, a votary of this divinity?

Worldly men have accepted as necessary not only the worship of Mammon, but also other beliefs and practices that are equally bad. Worldings seem to say by their behaviour, "You may violate the rules of truth, justice, and mercy—deceive, steal, commit adultery, and do all sorts of evil things, if you can elude the clutches of law or the eye of society. See, what is all the world doing; what such-and-such great men have done; how such a person got wealth and good name; even gods do such things. You must be a fool to neglect your own interests." Such are the thoughts and ideas of worldlings. They regard honest men honestly struggling for better lives to be mad. Those that have red spectacles on their nose cannot see any other colour. It is impossible for jaundiced eyes to see white light. Proud of their possessions, worldlings decry all that take up a different view of life. They tell you not to hear the syren voices of religious teachers whom they consider no better than fools.

Let me tell you a story, the story of some Oddas* discussing at one time about the superiority and inferiority of various castes. Mind, it was a drunken discussion, for the Oddas had taken large doses of arrack, and under the influence of intoxication, were disputing among themselves as to which caste was the best in the world. One of the group said, The Brahmin is of the highest caste ; another said, The Vellalah (the farmer) ; another suggested, The Komatee (the merchant), and every one of them made his own suggestion. But one of them, honoured by others as the wisest, said, The Odda is of the highest caste. All of them, though full of class-bias, yet eager to know the reason, asked, How, how. The wise man of the Oddas then said, "That we are superior to Kshatrias, Mudaliers, Naidus, Pillais and Gowdahs†, there is no doubt of it. But the question is whether we are superior to Brahmins or not, whether our caste or the caste of Brahmins is the better of the two.

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* Oddas, who are to be seen in South India belong to one of the lower castes of the Hindus.

† Names of different castes of Hindus.

Do you not see that we can easily find that out from the sounds of the names of both castes. "Brahmin"—Is there any force in that word ? It is uttered like the squeak of a mole ! But "Odda"—It comes like the roar of a lion or the sound of a drum. God, by making this difference in the names, has shown the bearers of which is the better of the two."

Like the Oddas of this story, worldlings are intoxicated with pride, and so consider any kind of life other than their own as not only inferior, but as the outcome of mental aberration. Yet all sacred scriptures and all wise men tell you to doubt and abjure their beliefs—beliefs about the worship of wealth, sensuality, and many other evil things of the world.

Yes, you should abjure them, drive them out from your hearts if they have crept in there, and solemnly say within yourselves, "I believe in one Absolute Being—the basis of the universe ; I believe in the Eternal Moral order; I believe in truth, justice, sympathy, and all other virtues ; I believe in the infinite perfectibility of the human race. May God give me strength to act according to these beliefs as long as my life lasts."

When these beliefs will burn like unquenchable fire in your hearts, radiating holiness over your life and lending celestial glory to your actions, then shall come to you that intoxicating love of God or the divine ideal you worship—a love that the wicked world considers as the culmination of madness, (as if the world itself is not mad—mad with lust, mad with anger, mad with avarice, and all the vices begotten by selfishness and sin), a love that led so many sages and saints to spurn the painted pleasures of the world—to throw away worldly possessions, court poverty, and homelessness, and defy public contempt.

When Saint Francis of Assisi was filled with the love of Christ and married himself in a mystical way with Poverty ; when his father arrested and brought him to judgment for misusing his property ; when he threw away his clothes, the last of his paternal possessions, and standing naked before the people assembled for witnessing his trial, said, "So long I was the son of Bernardini ; hence forward I will call none other father than Him who is in heaven ;" the world called him mad. And if you turn your mental gaze from the West to the East, to our own sacred motherland, you will find hundreds and thousands of saints and sages from the past and the present —a truly celestial host—whose angelic souls were filled with a fiery love of god and godly life and who walked on this earth, scattering blessings wherever they went, wiping tears from the eyes of the poor and the helpless, and bringing the message of peace and joy to those laden with sin and sorrow.

Have you not heard of the divine madness of Budha ? How the great prince, the heir-apparent to the throne of Kapilavastu, snatched himself away from his beautiful wife and young child ; how, in the dead of night, he wandered away from his princely palace into homelessness to find out the remedy for evils of life and bring everlasting peace to men. Or have you not heard of the divine madness of Chaitanya ? How the learned pundit of Nuddea, the glory of that town, became like a child giving up pride, and like a mad man wept day and night for his beloved Hari ; and finally, one night stole away from his house to find his adored lord ; how startled as if by an evil dream his mother rose from her bed and searched for him in vain, shouting his pet name, Nimai ! Nimai ! again and again, and filling the still air of the night with her lamentations. Lastly, have you not heard of the madness of him whom we regard as our guide and lord—the divine madness of Sri Ramakrishna ? How, when for the first time, the vision of the Almighty Mother came to him like a flash of light, he fell down as one struck by lightning, and when consciousness returned, wept bitterly and rolled on the ground like a child that had lost its mother. How, with streaming eyes, he prayed, from day to day, from sunrise to sunset and watched, expecting to see Her every moment. How, when the sun would go down and the bells of the temple would call men to their evening prayers, he would cry bitterly again, saying, " Mother ! Mother ! Another day of my life is flown, yet thou hast not come to me, yet have I not seen thy loving face. How ong shall I remain without thee, O Mother ?

I cannot live without thee. Come ! Come ! My life is ebbing away." O for this divine madness ! Who will not like to be mad like him and see, even for a moment, the glorious face of the Mother of the universe ?

To be mad with the love of God, to shun all the sugared lies of the world, to live holy life and advance towards God, who is our refuge, our home, is a bliss that rarely comes to man. So let us say with some of the saints of Bengal, " Make me mad, O Mother ! I care not for the vain disputations of the learned." and again, " Say, Glory unto Mother ! Say, Glory unto Mother ! Let the world call you mad. There are two words good and evil ; let us do what is good." My dear friends, are you still afraid of the word, madness ?

When the world will call you a lunatic, but the love of God will germinate in your soul, when that love will branch out and bear flowers and fruits, you will be gradually, like one possessed with a spirit.

What do we notice in a person who is supposed to be possessed with a spirit. Moonideism and loss of self-consciousness. A man supposed to be under the influence of a spirit, has one idea dominant in his mind; one thought towering over other thoughts, often pushing them out, and reigning in solitary supremacy. The obsession by one idea is the characteristic of the peculiar malady, popularly known as the possession by a spirit. When a man gets it, his consciousness about his own self departs, and he becomes a tool of that idea. When he talks, people say, the spirit is talking; when he walks, the spirit is walking.

When you will love God with a fervid heart, then in your mind, the idea of God will dominate over all other ideas, turning them into its slaves. All thoughts bred by ignorance, all ideas of selfishness, all weaknesses will be excommunicated for ever from your mental sphere. Besides the idea of God and godly life, nothing will be attractive for you. Your soul, like a magnetised needle, will ever point towards God. Even if it be deflected temporarily by worldly ideas, forced upon it unawares, it will oscillate back to its original position—its position of rest. Gathering up all its forces, your mind will be flaming with love for the Divine Being. Though you may live in this world, yet impressions from the world will not produce permanent change in your mind ; they will slip off from it as do balls of ivory from marble inclined planes. They will come and go without producing any agitating effect. Your mind will ever remain the same, like the ocean, though rivers of impressions pour into it.

Apuryamānam achalapratishtham,
Samudramāpah pravishanti yadvat,
Tadvat kāmā yam pravishanti sarve,
Sa shāntimapnoti na kāma kāmi.

Then you will feel God's presence close to you. You will feel His presence when getting up from bed ; you will feel His presence while saying grace over your food ; you will feel His presence when starting on a journey ; and you will feel Him very near to you on critical occasions of your life. You will feel that you are a tool, He is the great craftsman ; you are a machine, He, the great mechanic, your guide and life ; you will feel that you own nothing, all are His ; He has taken everything, even your heart, your life, and your soul ; and you are a puppet in the world's marionette. "My God ! My God ! Nothing moves, not even a sparrow falls nor a leaf flutters but by Thy will ! Let Thy will and not my will be done ; may 'Thou' and not 'I', be the king of my heart." Such will be your prayers, such your solicitude, and such your yearning for Him.

Slowly but steadily, your lower self—self that begets selfishness, generates false notions of 'me' and 'mine', produces false love and false hatred, gives rise to passions which torment and tear asunder the spiritual nature of man causing the din and tempest of battle to rage where there ought to be peace and harmony—your lower self will begin to melt away like morning dew before the glory of day. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that there are two manifestations of ego, the higher and the lower, the developed and the undeveloped. The lower one makes a man say in selfishness and pride, "I", "I", "Mine" "Mine"; but the higher one makes him say, "Thou" "Thou" "Thine" "Thine". So when you will be filled with the spirit of God, your lower ego will go for ever, taking away with it all its train of evil. I say it will go for ever. For every one pushes his pride into the background and shows a contrite heart when failures fill him with shame, and pricks of conscience take away the ease and rest of his mind. He then cries out, "Man proposes, God disposes"; God's will is done at all times; but his lower self asserts itself again, when he meets with success. All cry out, "Lord! Lord!" when they are in sorrow. It is not so with the devout man filled with His spirit. He sees God and His hand in everything and at all times. To him God is everything, and he nothing.

Then under the influence of His spirit, you will enter into ecstatic communion with God, that celestial state never dreamt of by the worldly, in which thousand springs of joy, like springs of nectar, will well up within you, bathing you in exquisite bliss. Then your self-consciousness will be obliterated by God-consciousness—then the sun, the moon, and the stars will show God's glory, and the plant-world and the world of life will bespeak His presence to you, and you will feel yourself drowned in an ocean of light. Waking up from the ecstatic union with the Infinite Spirit, then you will come down to world-consciousness, though still a man among men, yet a prince with the diadem of wisdom on your brow, to lead men forth from the Unreal to the Real, from Darkness to Light, and from Death to Immortality. If you aspire for this wisdom, then be like a child, humble, sincere, faithful and desirous of acquiring knowledge; be intoxicated and mad with the love of God; and be filled with His spirit to see His presence everywhere.

But if you do not believe in any theistic religion, if you, like a free-thinker, believe only in an ethical religion and regard Perfection of Humanity as your aim, even then, be mad with that aim; be filled with the idea as if it were God; toil, struggle, and spend all the energies of your life for its realisation, till your narrow self wears away and gives place to universal self; till Falsehood, Injustice, and Cruelty are banished for ever, and a veritable paradise is established here below.

V

ILLUSIONS.

Though we are gifted by Nature with various senses for perceiving the objects of the world and are proud of possessing them, yet how often we interpret wrongly in our minds objective impressions and regard things what they are not. When we are making any statement about a thing, if anybody questions it, we boastfully assert, trusting in our own experience, that we have seen it with our own eyes, or touched it with our own hands, or smelt or tasted it ourselves or heard its sound with our own ears. Though we rely so much upon our sense-organs, yet they cannot always be trusted as sure instruments of knowledge. Our eyes often deceive us, our ears bring us false reports, our nose produces wrong sensations, our tongue proves itself unreliable, our touch plays treachery with us, and our mind which judges the impressions brought by these runs into errors from which it finds great difficulty to extricate itself.

If on the full-moon day, you go out of your house into any open field and see the moon rise, you will observe that as it comes, like a disc of burnished gold, out of the horizon and slowly mounts up the sky, it appears larger than usual—much larger than when it shines in its silvery splendour from over our heads ; yet if you devise an apparatus for measuring the apparent diameter of the moon, you will find that it does not change at all in size in its motion from the horizon to the meridian. Here is a case of optical illusion.

In one of the beautiful autumn nights, when we have short showers of rain followed by almost clear sky with white fleecy masses of cloud swiftly drifting across it, if you chance to get out of your bed and gaze up to the moon, it will seem to you to be running rapidly through space ; yet every one knows that it is merely an illusion. The moon never hurries through the sky ; it never changes its slow and steady motion. Here the motion of the clouds is falsely ascribed to the moon.

Have you ever driven in morning twilight along a mountain-road ? Then you may have noticed that, seen from the high road, fogs gathered in the valley below, give rise to illusory appearance of water, and there appear to be large lakes lying calm in the lower regions where there are really cottages and fields ready to start out when the rays of the sun will dissolve the vapours away. While travelling in a railway car, you gaze through the windows in an indolent mood, and the telegraph posts along the way seem to you to run past. It is only an illusion ; the telegraph posts are firmly fixed in the ground and are not living creatures that they would move about. The street post in the dark scares a man under illusion as a ghost would ; and a piece of rope hung up by one end in a wall or lying crooked on the ground looks like a streak of water or a serpent. A colourless crystal appears like a ruby in the proximity of a red flower. If you go to the building of any meteorological office and look up to the Anemometer (the apparatus kept upon the roof-top for measuring the velocity of wind, and made of an iron cross with its four arms running through four cups and revolving round a fixed vertical axis) you may think it to be rotating in a direction quite contrary to what it is doing. A glowing piece of charcoal swung swiftly round and round appears like a continuous line of fire to your eyes. On the observation of this fact, the modern Bioscope has been constructed. The Bioscope throws in quick succession a series of lantern pictures upon a screen and they produce in you the sensation of a continuous action. All these are cases of the illusions of the eye.

Do not think that only your eyes give rise to wrong perceptions. Take the case of your sense of touch. Place a pencil upon a table and press it with your index and middle fingers, the latter crossing over the former, and give it a rolling motion to and fro. After a few minutes, your fingers will appear to you to be touching two pencils, instead of one. Or bring the ends of a pair of compasses very near to each other, and let a friend of yours move the ends lightly in touch with various parts of your back ; in some places, you will feel distinctly the double touch of the compass-points, but at others, they will appear single.

When blood stagnates in your feet, you feel, when you try to walk, a different sensation from what you feel when it is flowing. And the muscular sense, allied to the tactual, often acts in the same untrustworthy way. Examine with your hands two weights having very little difference between them. At first you will distinguish easily the heavier from the lighter, but after changing them from the one hand to the other, you will get confused and be unable to say with certainty which is the lighter and which, the heavier of the two.

When men come across a new thing, they first note it keenly with their eyes, then touch it, and then generally bring it close to the nose or the ear to see if it has any smell or emits any sound, and then, if the appearance is not revolting, but on the other hand tempting, they may put it in the mouth and find its taste, though I would caution all against this last method of examination.

Our sense of smell leads us into gross errors. For instance, when you go to buy attar from a scent-dealer, he brings out from his stores a specimen for your approval, and then rubbing a drop of it upon your hand, requests you to smell. You smell and ask its price. He quotes a low figure. You want something costlier and so ask him to show some attar of better quality. If he has none, but happens to be a smart dealer, he then rubs drops of some kinds of strong attar upon your skin and makes you examine them. After a time, when you have inhaled these strong odours, your sense of smell gets confused and becomes incapable of distinguishing between fine shades of fragrance. Then he brings out in a different bottle the same attar that he displayed first, and probably eliciting your approval, makes you pay double the price he demanded in the beginning. Thus your sense of smell deceives you.

Cinnamon has got a peculiar flavour. Any one can make it out by tasting a bit of it. But if you pinch your nose for some time with your fingers, and then taste cinnamon, it will appear to you to have lost its flavour and have the taste of dealwood.

How often we fall into illusions of hearing! The voice of the wind in a tempestuous night appears like the lamentation of a man in danger.

A solitary traveller walking along a dark road is often frightened by the rustlings of his own clothes or sounds of falling leaves, thinking them to be foot-falls of a man secretly following him. When you eagerly wait with your watch in your hand, to listen to the report of the gun, the banging sound of a door or window often misleads you.

That the sense of taste often gets vitiated is known to all. After a prolonged attack of illness, often the sweetest things appear bitter to us. And if we are to believe in the testimony of writers having personal experience in the matter, we should learn that it is hard for a man to distinguish the flavour of Claret from that of butter-milk, when he closes his nostrils with his fingers.

Illusions arise in us not only through the inherent and accidental defects of our senses, but our mind which rules over them and controls and corrects their activity, often labour under them and lead us into false judgements. After travelling miles in a railway train, when you go to a new place, you may have noticed that at times you find it difficult to make out correctly the cardinal points. You ask someone there, which is the east, and he points it out to you. Though you believe in his words, yet it often seems to you that the point shown is not the east. You see the sun rise and are convinced, yet for sometime, the illusion lingers on and makes you think, as if in that particular place, the sun does not rise in the east, but in some other quarter. It is only when you consult a map, or by reflection, form a clear mental picture of the direction in which you travelled in coming to that new place, that your illusion goes away.

The world of fashion is ruled by the wealthy. The rich have many idle moments to spare and so find out those colors and cuts of dresses that fit them best. So when they come out in their newly-invented shirt or coat, the poorer people often fall into the illusion that that particular kind of shirt or coat is the most beautiful thing ever found out—that it is most convenient thing to put on, though, in fact, judged by the standard of utility or beauty, it may be the most monstrous thing ever invented by man. And in course of time, it is proved so.

The rich discard after a time that particular kind of shirt or coat and the tide of popular fancy flows away in another direction. Thus we see that these modes of dress, like soap-bubbles thrown out in the air by a boy at play, rise, flourish in their colored glory, and pass away in quick succession before our eyes.

Similar to these is the illusion of the servant-boy that apes the dress and the gait of a British soldier. A soldier pays almost exclusive attention to the culture of his body. He spends much of his time in various forms of physical exercise. So he possesses a broad chest, rounded shoulders, and sinewy muscles. Dressed in tight trousers and coat, and a light ornamented cap placed slantingly upon his head, with a stick under his arm and a cigar in his mouth, he appears to the imagination of the servant-boy as the very personification of power and beauty. So he too dresses himself in a tight suit, he too takes a stick under his arm and a cigar in his mouth, and in his illusion, thinking himself to be metamorphosed into a soldier or something like it, struts in pride through the street, though with his dark complexion and the dress that hardly matches with it, he appears to others far from a beautiful specimen of humanity. Do not laugh at the poor servant-boy. If you cast your eyes round, you will see that many persons of higher rank and greater culture are doing the same thing though in ways different from his, and are making themselves objects of laughter by their illusory ideas of dress.

When two things appear closely associated before us, we have a tendency to consider one to be the cause of the other, though it may not be so. Mere association cannot establish causal connexion between two things. Our old philosophers say, "Yad vina yannabhavati tat tasya kâranam"—that is its cause without which a thing cannot come into existence. As, there can be no rain without clouds. Yet this condition which must be fulfilled by every cause is often lost sight of by men, and mere association of a thing with another, or mere pre-existence to it is supposed by the ignorant to establish its causal character. So they get into various illusions. If you look out for them, numerous instances of such illusions you will meet with everywhere. There is a plentiful crop of mango one year, and in the same year, plague or some other epidemic breaks out in virulence; so some of the ignorant crowd set afloat a rumour that from mangoes plague or that disease comes into existence. Or a meteor appears in the sky, and in the same year, by chance, there is scarcity of rain and failure of crops of food-grains, immediately the ignorant masses father famine to the unusual appearance in the sky. Not only uneducated people are subject to such illusions, but men of better sense and culture are seen to fall into them.

Some poets have sung highly in praises of wine; some learned men were addicted to drinking. So some foolish persons fall into the monstrous illusion that their genius or learning was due to their use of strong drink, and conclude that if they will but take to using alcohol or any narcotic drug, they will be able to produce prodigious amount of brilliant literature. Thus deluded, they begin their career of vice with the drinking of a small measure—a glass. But their genius seems dull and does not respond fully to the stimulus of such a small quantity. So the glass merrily mounts up to the bottle, and the bottle, instead of bringing out from them fine pieces of literature, brings about in them a blighted intellect, shattered nerves, and a life of unbearable misery. Those great men whose examples these mistaken men try to follow, were great in spite of their use of drink or any other intoxicant. Their drinking and greatness were not related as cause and effect. How much greater they would have been if they had not given themselves up to that vice, who can say? How many great men were and are in this world who produced and produce great works not "under the fumes of wine," but "by their devout prayer to the Eternal Spirit"; who, leading a life of purity, make their works glow with the radiance of their virtuous life?

I will tell you of another illusion—an illusion to which almost all men are subject and from which only highly spiritual persons can free themselves—the illusion about the beauty of women. Almost all men consider women to be beautiful and so the expression "fair sex" is universally applied to them. Ask a boy why he gazes intently at times upon the face of a girl. Probably he may not be able to answer it, yet if you can read the secret of his heart, you will find that he considers the girl to be a beautiful creature. The young man is drawn towards the young woman, like iron towards magnet, with all the force of youthful passion. And the old man, in whom the flame of passion is flickering out or has become extinct, gazes at times intently upon his daughter, and the almost faded memory of his long-dead wife lights up his countenance for a few moments. There is a mysterious attraction between persons of the opposite sex. This attraction colours their eyes, and gilds with beauty for each the other's face, and so they consider each other beautiful and seek for each other's company. There is an old myth which says that human beings were created in the form of hermaphrodite—man and woman united in one person. They were then monstrous creatures, with four hands, four feet, and a double head. They grew very powerful and began doing great mischief to others in this world. So one day Jupiter grew angry and hurled his thunderbolt at them. The thunder split them in twain, and thus man and woman became separate. From that day, man, the one half, is seeking for woman, the other half, to be united. For this reason there is a mysterious force always drawing them together. Be that as it may, this attraction is the cause of this illusion under which man thinks woman to be beautiful. Is woman really beautiful ?

Turn your eyes to the animal world, you will find that the males are, in most cases, more beautiful than the females. The cock is more beautiful than the hen. The cock-sparrow is finer in appearance than the hen-sparrow. The bull is better-looking than the cow, and horses, lions, tigers, elephants, and many other animals do not show exception to this rule. Physically, man is but a higher animal—the final product of the process of evolution. Can he escape from coming under this rule ? On the other hand we may justly suppose that he would present the same appearance of advantage, if any intelligent being outside humanity were to compare his beauty with that of the opposite sex. Without any feeling of disrespect to womankind, I say that it is an illusion—this idea that woman is more beautitul than man. This illusion increases all the more, when a man's heart is fired with passion. Lust throws round a person of the opposite sex a halo which disppears when lust is quenched. A man under passion has often a vitiated judgment and sees "Hellen's beauty in Egypt's brow." Almost universal as this illusion is, very few feel it to be so and call it by its just name.

But the greatest of all illusions—the illusion *par excellence*—under which all men are born in this world and from which very rarely a man escapes to be adored by humanity, and from which all should try to free themselves, is what we have about our own selves. Question any man as to what he knows about his own self, he tells you things which show you that he knows very little about his own nature. Identifying himself with his body, he says that he is a fat or a lean, or a tall or a short man; identifying himself with his senses he calls himself a keen-sighted or a short-sighted, a lame or a strong-legged man ; identifying himself with his mind, he says that he is a cheerful or a gloomy man. Then probably he asserts that he is a land-owner, an officer of the state, or a prince, or a learned man, a professor, an author, or what not. In all these statements, he discloses only his ignorance. He has no fixed notion about his own self. At one time he thinks himself one with his body and considers fatness, leanness, or any trait of his body to be his characteristic ; again, he thinks that he is one with his senses and ascribes keen-sightedness, or short-sightedness, or any other quality of the senses to himself ; then again he characterises himself with the attributes of his mind and calls himself joyous or sorrowful. His notion of Self seems to be swinging. It is moving from body to senses and senses to mind and back again. Then he shows pride by styling himself by names signifying none of his real characteristics. An ancient philosopher said, " Do not call yourself wealthier, more learned, or more eloquent than your neighbour. If you do so, you will be in error.

Your wealth, learning, or eloquence may be greater than that of your neighbour, but they do not really belong to yourself."

Curious though it may appear to some of you, yet it cannot be gainsaid that you are not one with your body. For what is your body? It is only an aggregate of material particles. Chemists will tell you that it is composed of some fourteen elements, *viz.*, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen, etc. Old philosophers thought it to be made up of five elements, *viz.*, earth, water, air, fire, and ether. Five or fourteen it matters little, it is made of matter. You see it and feel it in the same way as you do any other thing. It is an object presented to your consciousness. But the material constituents of your body are not permanent, they are ever changing, ever coming in and going out. As you are working with your hands, as you are walking with your legs, as you are thinking thoughts, you are losing some portion of the substance of your body. The muscles are wearing out, the nerves are being wasted, and the brain is being consumed. The air that enters into your lungs comes out laden with carbon ; the countless pores of your skin pour out perspiration, and your intestines evacuate from time to time the refuse of your system. Thus you loose matter from your body in various ways, as it moves and does its work like an engine. To make up for its loss, to make it go and prevent its collapse, you feed it with food. Food, by becoming blood, renovates the wasted muscles, nerves, and brain. Thus every moment, within you, is going on the twofold process of assimilation and disassimilation—recuperation and waste. As long as life will last in you, this double process will continue. It is an essential condition of life. The inevitable consequence of this process is that, after a time, all the material particles of your body get changed. Within a few years, Physiologists say, the physical body is imperceptibly hauled down and reconstructed. Physically, you become a new man after a time. Yet your Self remains the same. You may be an aged man hastening slowly to your last bed of rest ; yet you remember those days of your life when you played with flowers in the fields and listened with joy to the songs of birds.

You remember that day when you went to school for the first time and met with new companions, and a new world was opened to you ; that day when you were united by the tie of marriage with your wife and a revolution took place in your thoughts and feelings, and those long, long years of chequered existence when children were born and children died, when fortune and misfortune taught you the transitoriness of worldly pleasures. Those days are gone, gone for ever, yet you are the same person. Your Self has not undergone change. If it had, how could you bring back to yourself the incidents of past years ? There is no break in the line of your conscious existence. In childhood, you had feeble limbs incapable of lifting even light loads ; you got strong arms and a full-formed stature and walked with light steps in youth ; and now old age has emaciated your frame and taken away strength and elasticity from it. You have seen all these going on in your body—they were pictures presented to your consciousness. How can you say that you are one with your body ?

You are not indentical with your senses. What are they ? Are they not parts of your body ? Or if you, with the ancient philosophers, believe them to be subtle material things placed behind the sense-organs, even then, are they not as much subject to mutation and as much objects of consciousness, as the grosser members of your body ? You may have laughed as a boy at your grandmother and mother, when they could not pass a thread through the eye of a needle at night, and requested you to do it for them. You wondered then what was it that made them brush the thread against the sides of the needle, instead of sending it quickly through its eye. Now when age has dimmed your sight, you feel the same difficulty which your grandmother and mother felt. Your eyes have changed. You got prizes in your school sports, for running races, and for high jumps and long jumps, but now you feel disinclination to walk a long distance, and take rather a roundabout route than jump over a small ditch in your way. Your legs have changed. So with your ears, hands, and other organs of perception and motion. They change with age, but you do not.

And your mind? That too is not permanent. Let me tell you here that many western philosophers consider mind to be one with the Soul. But our ancient Hindu philosophers considered mind as something material and quite distinct from Âtma. The principal reason for their supposing mind to be material was that it is acted upon by matter. By the action of matter, it grows or diminishes in its power and activity. Fast for a few days, and you will see that your powers of concentration will be gone; you will not be able to read and write in the same as you do now. Your learning will seem to slip away from you. And you will not be susceptible of joy and sorrow as much as you are at present. Or take the case of a drunkard. He quaffs the goblet of wine, and after a time what a change is wrought in his mind! He is no longer the same man. He talks without reason, abuses persons he ought to honour. A blight seems to light upon his mind and destroy its healthy tone. How could mind be affected by food and drink, if it were not material? So our ancient philosophers concluded that it is composed of matter, subtle and invisible to our senses.

Mind is also changeable. It buds, grows, and decays. From childhood to old age, how many changes we notice in it! Joys, sorrows, and other phenomena are due to changes in the substance of the mind. They are like waves and ripples rising and disappearing from moment to moment as impacts from the outside world arrive at it. And all these changes are presented to your Self. Your Self—the simple uncolored conciousness—remains the same witnessing sensations, thoughts, feelings, and volitions generated by your mind. Consciousness which seems to belong to your mind and inhere to your sensations, thoughts, and feelings, come from your Self. The light of consciousness in which your mind shines is a derived light. It has its origin in your self. Like a pure crystal resplendent in the proximity of a luminous body, your mind is secondarily luminous. It is ever-changeful, but your Self—the abode of pure simple consciousness—knows no change

But you may ask why should we suppose Self to be a distinct principle, self-existent and independent of the material aggregate of body, mind, and senses? Why not think it to be but a product of matter—a new phenomenon generated by the combination of material elements? Though the material particles of the body are no doubt in flux—never remaining in the same state—yet the structural form of the body persists under all the changes. Can we not suppose that Self or pure simple consciousness, which remains unchanged though changes take place in the body, mind, and senses, owes its existence to the persistent structural form of the body—that personal identity is the outcome of identical form of structure?

No, we cannot conclude that conciousness or Self is created by the form of the material constituents of the body? For what is a form? Is it not merely a mode of arrangement of particles in space? Arrange in your fancy material particles—atoms and molecules—in as many ways as you please, move them right and left, up and down, and group them in countless ways, yet you cannot imagine how consciousness will be evolved out of them. Dull dead material particles may be shaped in millions of ways, but the light of consciousness will not flash out of them. And what is matter? What are its particles? Are they not objects existing in space? Does consciousness exist in space? Can we say, unless we use a figure of speech, that this hall is full of consciousness. The expression, a roomful of consciousness will excite laughter, but a roomful of food-grains or other material things will not. How can matter, which is spatial, give rise to that which is non-spatial?

And who told you that there is matter? That you have a body or a brain, that it is composed of cells, molecules or atoms? Is it not through consciousness that you know it? The material world is known through consciousness. You are a conscious being first, and then a perceiver of the material world: How can you explain the more known by the less known, the near by the remote, the certain by the dubious? Consciousness first, then through it you know matter. We may doubt and deny the existence of matter, but we cannot do so with consciousness. To deny consciousness is to presuppose and assert it.

If any man says I am not conscious, we think him to be a lunatic. Is he not proving his consciousness by trying to deny it? So it is absurd to suppose that material particles, by a mysterious process of combination, by assuming a peculiar form, has given rise to consciousness. Consciousness, pure and simple, free from the accidents of thought, feeling, and volition, is the very nature of your Self. So your Self is distinct from your body, senses, and mind.

You may ask again, how is my Self related to other selves? Am I a finite being shining by my own light—the light of consciousness—and shedding that lustre on my mind, senses, and body, but distinct from others who are also independently resplendent like me? Are human souls in this world like so many stars dwelling apart from one another? Or are they really one, though but different apparent manifestations of a common principle?

Vedanta declares that there is no essential difference between you and others. Like the numerous reflections of the glorious sun in different pools of water, you and others are but different manifestations of the One Infinite God. What is a reflection ? Is it different from the object reflected ? No. It is only a vision of the object through a reflecting medium. The light of the sun falls upon a clear surface ; it bends back and enters into your eyes. Your eyes are so constructed that they see the image of the object in prolongation of the last line in which light has reached them, and so you see a picture of the sun beneath the reflecting surface. It is not a new sun that you see in the reflector, but the same sun that is looking down from above. A reflection has no independent existence. It is only an appearance. So the light of consciousness that is shining in you is the light of God. It is not different in you and your neighbour, though your body, mind, and senses, and his body, mind, and senses are different. He and you are one; you are one with all ; you are one with God. Our Vedas declare : " That Thou art "—" *Tat tvam asi* " ; I am God " *Aham Brahmāsmi* ".

Strange though it may appear to many, yet it is the highest Truth about yourself which the most ancient scriptures of the world proclaim and which has been felt and realized by highly spiritual minds in all ages and climes. "That Thou art". Your worldly-minded ignorant teachers of religion will loudly preach against this sacred teaching of the Vedas. They will call it an absurd, blasphemous, and pernicious doctrine, giving rise to all forms of immorality in its believer. To identify oneself with God! Will it not puff a man with pride—the vice that drove Satan out of heaven and made him the eternal enemy of God? Will it not incline a man to lying, theft, fornication, and all manner of evil deeds, as he, thinking himself the Most High, will imagine that he is above all restrictions of morality? Will it not make a man highly selfish and exacting obeisance and services from others, without laying on him the obligation of honouring and serving them in return?

Does Vedanta really foster immorality? Does it generate in a man all evil inclinations condemned by the moral sense of humanity? Those who think so and raise foolish objections against it, without understanding the true signification of its great teaching, have a very low idea of God and humanity. Can a God lie, steal, or enter with a wicked mind into a harlot's house? Some deluded men may represent dramatically or by any other art, that God has no scruples about committing vicious acts—they only paint God in their own image. The man that lies, steals, or commits adultery is the man that has identified himself with his body, senses, and mind. He thinks that if he gratifies his senses, his Self will be gratified. He considers himself an isolated unit, separate from all others, and so he attaches a great importance to his own personality. Reflecting on his worldly possessions, which only conduce to the health and happiness of the body, senses, and the intellect, but have no connection with man's spiritual nature, he fills himself with false pride. His attention is ever directed to the world and the pleasures that come from the world. A Vedantist, who contemplates his identity with God, frees himself from the weaknesses of the flesh. His mind does not find delight in the gratification of the senses, as he knows that sensuality clouds one's spiritual vision and makes one incapable of realising the Truth. The moment a man gives himself to vice, his mind is dragged down from God to gross sensual pleasures. He forgets that he is one with God ; he becomes oblivious of his glorious Self. He looses sight of the Truth and finds pleasure in Vanities. No, he who believes in the doctrine of Vedanta cannot be immoral. Ever bearing in his mind his oneness with God, he grows into the holiest and noblest of men. Every doctrine can be misinterpreted. The best gift of Nature can be perverted to the basest use. Food, by putrefaction and wrong use, may become a source of disease. The juice of grape may be turned into the cause of vice and degradation. Medicinal herbs may be used for killing, instead of curing, human beings. Is it the fault of food, drink, or medicine, or of the man that makes the misuse.

Though a man may now be convinced of this great truth—that he is one with God and one with his fellowmen,—yet a moment afterwards his conviction may be quite inoperative upon his life. There comes a poor man at his door for help, and he abuses him for his poverty. There is a large sum of public money entrusted to his care, and he feels an inclination to appropriate it. There is his neighbour's wife and he looks with lust upon her. On all these and many other trying situations, on many good and evil occasions of his life, he sets aside his conviction, that he is one with God and that he should always act in accordance with his knowledge.

Our oneness with God and our oneness with our fellowmen we forget often and slide back often into the illusion that we are one with the body, senses, and mind. This illusion clings like a chronic malady to our nature. Seeming to leave, it leaves us not. We try to cure it by various means, it subsides for a time and then reappears in its old form. Like the curly tail of a dog, or like the watch-spring which springs back to the crooked shape when straightened, our mind reverts to its habitual attitude ; as if it does not love to rest in Truth but in Illusion.

Let us then study the nature of this illusion a little deeply. As a doctor by studying the nature of a disease finds out its remedy, so let us try to discover the cure for this illusion.

All illusions arise, first, from imperfect perception and then from the mis-reading of that perception. They are partially true and partially false. The boy that is scared by the street post and thinks it to be a supernatural being with arms outstretched to grasp him, sees the post, but sees it imperfectly. His imperfect perception fuses with the idea of ghost he has in his mind, and thus arises his illusion. The man that is frightened by a bit of rope on the road as if it were a snake, sees the crooked shape and the dark colour, but blends with this perception the idea of the snake he has in his brain, and thus the illusion is produced. So when a man considers himself one with his body, or senses, or mind, he knows his Self, but knows only imperfectly. He superposes upon the idea of Self other ideas that originate from his perception of the body, senses, and mind. Fatness or leanness, keen-sightedness or short-sightedness, or joy or sorrow, which actually characterises his body, senses, or mind, he falsely ascribes to his Self. He sees himself darkly in the mirror of his mind, the mirror of his senses, and the mirror of his body. As a man gazing through coloured glasses, sees the sky tinted with hues which it does not possess, so he, seeing his Self through the media of his body, senses, and mind, ascribes their characters to it. Thus the universal illusion of man comes into existence.

And almost all illusions (unless due to the functional derangement of organs, *e.g.* the perception of yellow colour everywhere by the jaundiced eye, or the perception of bitter taste in everything by the diseased palate, and these illusions are brought to an end by bringing the organs to a state of health) can be dispelled by suggestion, reflection, and concentration of mind. Suggestion generally leads to reflection and reflection to concentration of mind. Suggest to the man who is wrongly thinking that the anemometer in the yonder observatory is gone wrong, that it is all right; his illusion will immediately disappear. When you have fallen into the illusion that the moon is moving quickly over the clouds, let any man tell you, "See it is not the moon, but the clouds that are running", you see closely, and your false idea is immediately dispelled. You feel the double touch of the pencil while rubbing it upon the table with your fingers crossed, but when you reflect and make your mind alert by gathering up its scattered powers, you no longer perceive the former false sensation. When you are walking alone in the dark and have been frightened by the sound of imaginary foot-steps, listen, reflect, and there will be no more illusion.

So the illusion about your Self may be dispelled by the same three-fold means. Some one may suggest to you the Truth about your Self, and you may realise it immediately. Otherwise you shall have to reflect and think deeply on the subject, concentrate your mental powers upon it, and then the illusion shall disappear. Our scriptures say that by the three-fold means of Sravanam, Mananam, and Nididhyasanam, the great illusion of man about his Self is brought to an end. Sravanam:— First you should listen to the teachings of the scriptures and great masters about the Truth. Mananam :—then you should weigh arguments pro and con, raise questions and find answers for them, so that a deep and settled conviction about the Truth is produced in your mind. Nididhyasanam :—Then you should contemplate on the Truth. This is the final rung of the ladder that will enable you to reach the state of illumination.

I.—SRAVANAM.

There are a very few exceptionally pure-hearted persons who by mere listening to the Truth immediately get rid of the Illusion. The moment they happen to hear that they are one with God, the All-prevading Spirit, they realise it immediately. All their old false notions, like a mass of gunpowder touched by a spark, dissolve away. They get the supreme knowledge without much effort and that knowledge entirely transforms their life. The world and worldly changes no longer affect them in the same way as they do other men. They see Light, and Darkness does not frighten them with her visage any more. Highly pure-minded and blessed are such persons and so they realise

God, the moment they hear of His glorious nature. Very rarely such souls visit this Earth.

There is an old parable. Once ten farmers wanted to go from their place to a neighbouring village. So they started together. After going some distance, they came upon a stream swollen with flood. As they could not wade through it, so they swam to the other bank. After reaching dry ground, they began counting their number to see if any were carried away by the stream. Each farmer counted, leaving himself out, and found nine persons only. They knew that, when they started from their place, they were ten in number. So they grew exceedingly sorrowful and began to wail loudly for the loss of the tenth man. They were filling the air with their cries, when a man came out of a house close by, and asked them the cause of their sorrow. They said that, when they started from their place, they were ten, but in swimming the river they had lost one of their number. The man instantly saw that they were ten in number, and so asked them how they had counted. Then each farmer counted 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and left himself out. The stranger laughed and told each of them as he was counting, "Thou art the tenth." Immediately his illusion vanished.

Even so there come to this world, some pure-hearted men who, when they hear of the Truth, immediately understand it. But with others the illusion continues. They may intellectually apprehend the Truth, but it never changes their life. Their apprehension of the Truth is not worth the name of knowledge. It is merely an opinion. They may have the opinion that they are immortal, yet fear death. They may say that they are one with others, because the same God dwells in all, yet hate them from the bottom of their hearts. It is only an opinion of theirs about the relationship of human beings. They may assert that they are one with God ; yet their assertion is only a lip-assertion. It has not touched their hearts ; it has not saturated their being. It is still extraneous and has not been assimilated. When dangers and difficulties will arise in their life, if they can show the influence of their conviction on their conduct, then we shall understand that Truth is not sitting lightly in their hearts, but has sent its root deep. A parrot learns to talk like man, but when it is attacked by a cat, it screeches out and shows its natural voice. It forgets its imitative prattle in times of danger. So the man without realisation may talk of his oneness with God and seem to show a high degree of knowledge, but in moments of trial his apparent knowledge proves of no avail. As all ordinary men do not realise the great truth of Vedanta by mere listening to its exposition at once, they should adopt the second and the last means.

II.—MANANAM.

Argue within yourselves whether the great doctrine of Vedanta is true or not. Fear not; truth will bear examination. Is there really any principle called Self distinct from the physical body? Why not suppose it to be identical with the visible material aggregate? What fallacy is committed thereby? Why should we not suppose man's soul to be essentially different from God? Why should we not consider it to be a mortal principle, resembling more or less material bodies? Is it infinite or finite? If it is infinite, can it be different from the

Infinite God ? Raise these and hundred other questions in your mind, try to find answers for them, and when you are unable, study books in which such questions have been discussed, or ask teachers that not only know their answers, but lead highly moral lives in conformity with their information. Do all this till a deep conviction of Truth is produced in you.

When you have been convinced of the Truth then you will find antagonism between it and your old habits of thought, imbibed from worldly surroundings and cherished long. There will ensue a wrestle between them. On many an occasion, on account of your fondness for them, your old modes of thought will get the upper hand in your mind. You will listen to their whispers and act accordingly. But Truth will not be routed so easily. She will assert her claim. She will call you to listen her majestic voice. But what an amount of mental strength is necessary for doing so! Weak and given to frequent relapses into evil ways as you find yourselves to be, how can you get that strength—strength that will enable you to part company with old evil ideas and thoughts and accept for ever the guidance of Truth? You can get it by

III.—NIDIDHYASANAM OR CONTEMPLATION.

Contemplation is the third means by which you can make the final and victorious onslaught upon the last outposts of Ignorance. Contemplation is the means resorted to by all that would unravel any mystery. It sends a shaft of light where there was deep gloom before. Like the optical lense, which gathers the diffuse rays of light and heat and throws them in one fiery blaze upon its focus, contemplation unites the scattered forces of the mind and makes them the source of knowledge and power. Through it, the unknown becomes known, and the unattained is attained. Are you unable to understand a deep subject? Is it defying your intellect? Sit down then in solitude and shut out all distracting ideas from your mind; attack your difficulty with the keen edge of contemplation. Lo! After a time, its dark mountainous wall suddenly tumbles down, and you see clear lighted path before you. Do you find it hard to decide between two courses of conduct—the Evil with its fascination is luring you and the Good with a stern voice is strictly warning you against it. Whom should you follow? There, the images of pleasant things are coming to you from one side—horses, carriages, bags of gold, applause of the thousand-throated multitude, newspaper articles blazing forth your glory, high places in assemblies amid decently dressed gentlemen and courteous obeisances from many dependants, but all these shadowed and paled by the sable cloud of vice; and there, from the other side, are coming to you images of apparently unpleasant things—life in a simple dwelling with simple furniture, long walks on business of your own or of others, a slender purse shared by the poor and quite inadequate for luxury, labour with none to praise, and company of men of similar circumstances, but all lighted up by the bright rays of virtue and God's blessings from above: Which should you prefer? Wealth with vice or poverty with virtue? Go into your closet; shut the door; calm your mind of all agitation caused by these crowding images; contemplate on the advantages of virtue and vice in the abstract; lift your heart to Him who is the source of your life and joy; and decide. Contemplation, sincere and earnest, will give the right bias to your heart. It will bring you out of the oppressive vaccilation of doubt and hesitation, and make you strong enough to tread the right way.

But how difficult is contemplation! You may be involuntarily led into deep thought about worldly matters connected with your daily life, you may feast your mind in fancy with images of sensual pleasure, but how difficult it is to fix it on Truth or God! Nothing you find so hard as to bring together the scattered forces of your mind and converge them upon the Supreme Being. Difficult it is to gather together grains of mustard when they have been scattered on all sides upon the pavement from a torn bag, difficult it is to keep water long in the palm of your hand, but far more difficult it is to unite and keep concentrated the diffused powers of your mind. You may tame tigers and serpents, you may harness the lightning from the sky to your chariot and make it drag you wherever you please, you may fly beyond the clouds and walk upon fire with immunity, but you will find it much harder to control your mind.

You compel your mind to do a task for you, to think out a great subject, but how like a wild horse, it runs away. You want to contemplate on God, the sublimest idea the mind can dwell upon. You enter into your closet; you have shut out all glare from it and made dim religious light prevail within. No intruders can disturb you there. You sit down and wish to close the chamber of your consciousness also, to all intruding ideas. You desire to have your beloved idea of God alone there. At first some obstinate ideas, like impudent fellows, try to come in, but you deny them entrance, and as if close the door of your heart before their faces. They seem to go away. Now you are alone with your adored idea. You enjoy the communion, but behold! in a few minutes, another idea gets in by some back door, or by some magical art. It comes in the likeness of the idea you are holding dearly in your heart, or it comes pleading its near connection with it. You do not wish to have it there, yet by its winning ways you are charmed, and you bestow a little attention to it. While you are attentive to it, lo ! it has slipped away introducing another idea like it in its place. You are fascinated again by the newcomer. In its turn, it vanishes calling in another to engage your attention. After a time, you wake up from this charm and find that you forgot God, left that idea entirely, and harboured thoughts having hardly any connection with Him.

There, a devotee is seated to meditate on the form of Gopala (child-Krishna), whom he worships. He thinks for some time of Krishna, but after a while, his mind roves away to the thought of his own child. Then from the thought of his child probably comes the thought of his wife. From his wife, his mind runs away into the consideration of his family difficulties. Then from there, it goes to think of his office, then office papers, and, in the end, the figures which he has written down on them float before its gaze. The devotee starts up then and is disgusted at the useless work he has been busy with in his mind. All these wandering ways of the mind have been experienced by all. How difficult it is to keep it in prolonged contemplation of God !

Why does your mind play treachery with you? Why does it love random thoughts or thoughts that do not relate to God? Why do you find it delighting in Delusion instead of in Truth? You do not want it to do so, yet it persists in its vicious way.

Your mind is unhealthy. It is impure. So it likes the pleasant things of the world more than God? It finds great charm not only in innocent pleasures, but in those filthy ones born of vice. It gloats upon worldly ideas, but the idea of God is distasteful to it.

The cure for this diseased condition of the mind lies in the cultivation of holiness in action, holiness in speech, and holiness in thought.

(1) Be holy in your action.

Keep yourself always engaged in good work. Though evil thoughts from which proceed evil deeds are very bad, yet they, by themselves, are not so condemnable as their progeny. For, evil thoughts, so long as they remain within a man's bosom, vitiate only his nature, but when they take the shape of deeds, they tell upon the lives of many persons. They degrade their agents, degrade those to whom they are directed, and many others are remotely affected by them. The drunkard drinks his drams not only to quench the holy fire of reason in his soul, but transmits his vicious thirst to his children. He injures his family by neglecting his duties to its members, and spoils probably a score or more of his relations and acquaintances by his evil example. The thief robs another man of his property, but robs himself of his best possession, moral cleanliness. Who can say that he does not loose more than gain by his theft? And does he not incite others to adopt the path of crime. The adulterer debases a woman by turning her into an instrument of pleasure. He rises against himself, rises against the woman he debases, rises against her husband, and rises against human society, moral order, and God? The unholy fire of lust not only scorches two spiritual natures, but spreads its baleful effects on all sides. As are drunkenness, theft, and adultery, so are other major and minor misdeeds.

If a man does not try to keep himself clean of evil actions, if he does not try to conquer his evil habits, how can he expect to attain a high state of spiritual growth? But there are many persons who think that vicious habits are compatible with religious life. These men are of opinion that meditation of God has nothing to do with virtuous character—that love of God and unholy life may go together. Everyday we meet with such deluded men who, under this superstitious opinion, mistake immoral quixotics for heroes of religion. Our great master Sri Ramakrishna used to say :—

"The man that intoxicates himself and says that he does it to contemplate, the householder that preaches the vanity of the world, but is deeply in love with it, and the Sanyasi (monk) that indulges his sexual appetite are three great cheats of the Kali age."

The power and the fruits of contemplation come to him whose actions are right, whose body and senses are under his control.

But few can, reviewing their past lives, say, that they have spent their days in absolute purity of conduct. The weakness of the flesh shows itself in all. Who can throw the stone of scorn upon another man for a guilt that he may have committed or may commit out of weakness some day if he lights upon evil circumstances and if he is not protected by Providence ? Even those that have led exceptionally pure lives, feel their imperfections. The greater the moral sense develops in man, the keener becomes the perception of his frailties. So to root them out, he should, by force of will, not only guard himself against evil, but keep himself always engaged in good deeds. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, that when a man runs a thorn into his flesh by accident, he takes another thorn or a thorn-like tool, as a needle, and pricks it out. So the man who is desirous of growing spiritual should prick out his evil habits and evil tendencies, by cultivating good habits and good tendencies. So keep yourself always engaged in good deeds.

But remember no good action is worthy of the name unless done in a disinterested spirit. Yours should not be the motive of appearing good, but becoming good. How men mar the beauty of their good deeds by their selfishness ! Men often do charity to be extolled, go to a temple or a church to be seen in such a place, and mingle with pious men to be classed with them. Even if they are not desirous of having such earthly rewards, how often they pitch their hearts upon fruits they hope to enjoy in heaven for their good acts! Vedanta advises you to disclaim all fruits of your good deeds and ascribe them to Him from whom they come.

Have you given away a large sum of money from your pocket? Thank Him who filled it with money and brought this opportunity of doing good. What you have given, is it really yours? Have you lifted a load from another's back? Thank Him from whom comes all strength and comes also the pleasure of doing such an act. Is the power you have used yours, that you should be proud? Would you not have done wrong if you had kept back your God-derived strength from such work? After doing the right thing in the right place, after paying off a debt when a demand came for it, is it not shameful to ask again a reward for such action in the other world? Those who expect rewards in heaven for their good deeds may get them (and who can understand fully the mysterious working of God's laws ?) but they will lose much by their indiscreet expectation. Good actions done for a return either here or in the other world, strengthen in man his false notions of "me" and "mine." Instead of purifying, they darken his heart. Worldliness or attachment for the pleasures of the world is bad, but other-worldliness or attachment for the pleasures of the other world is in no way desirable. He who will realise God will *be* good and *do* good out of no selfish motive. He will not expect price for truth, justice, and charity, but will speak truth, behave justly, and do acts of charity when occasions call for them out of mere love of virtue. Thus alone can he purify his nature from its long-accumulated incrustations of impurity.

(2) Be holy in your speech.

Do not defile your tongue by uttering lies, or words of flattery, or words for wilfully wounding others You are not gifted with the noble organ of speech to turn it to such a vile usage. You lose more by lies and flattering words than you gain. What are a few earthly advantages compared with the degradation of your soul you bring about by them. Every time you utter them, you make your mind more diseased, you blacken it more with the dye of sin, and make it incapable of shining in the light of God.

Why should you make men miserable by your offensive words? Is there not already sufficient misery in this world? Then why should you increase it by your severe language? One must be hopelessly perverted indeed if one delights in injuring others. Your words should heal and not vainly wound.

Eschew all evil and idle conversations. How often good men have fallen down from their eminence by engaging in them. Suppose a good man happens to be in the midst of vicious fellows. They are talking coarsely of women and wine, and extolling the pleasures of dissipated life. At first he hears their talk with disgust. His heart feels the degrading character of the company and tries to keep itself aloof. Though in their midst, yet he is not of them. He builds a mental barrier round his character and tries to protect it from evil influences. But alas! as the tide of conversation swells with mirth and pleasantry, his barrier falls and the vicious influence of the conversation penetrates his heart. At first, he loses his feeling of disgust, then finds positive pleasure, and at last, plunges himself into their conversation. Evil conversation gives rise to evil inclination, and the man loses his moral foothold. Then the actual commission of evil deeds completes his fall.

Avoid all evil talk as much as you can. Scandalous talk and gossip of others' affairs are not helps, but positive hinderances to the development of mind, though they are enjoyed like pickles and spiced food by men of vitiated taste. He who engages in them, vainly fritters away his valuable energies, and concentration of mind becomes impossible with him. What does it matter to you if your neighbour has a bad wife? How are you affected if one of your acquaintances has suddenly got a large sum of money by speculation? What if the horse of a rich man has won a race. Are they your or your brother's important affairs connected with life and death, that they should occupy so much of your time and thought? Then why should you babble about them? Are there not better things in this God's world to talk about? Idle talk not only wastes the valuable energies of the mind and makes it fitful, but it slowly grows vicious. No wise man engages in it and spends the valuable hours of his life in vain, and thus allows loop-holes for vice to creep into his character.

(3). Be holy in your thought.

Difficult it is to be holy in speech and action, but much more difficult it is to be holy in thought. How evil thoughts enter into a man's mind unawares! How sensations from the outer world excite them; how evil images come unbidden into the heart! Hard it is, no doubt, to control senses, but harder work it is to shut out from the mind memories of sensual gratifications. In moments of idleness, often impure pictures wake up from the depth of a man's mind. They cause disturbance by their unholy presence even in his hours of meditation.

Though you may think that you do not like the evil, but love the good, that you have turned from vice and made the holy resolution of walking in the path of virtue, yet you may find that you cannot keep out evil thoughts from your bosom. Why it happens so ? Why evil thoughts cling to your mind notwithstanding your desire for getting rid of them ?

Because you have courted them long, so you cannot expect that they will cease from troubling you at once. If you fondle a dog, it will fawn upon you, even when you do not like its presence. If you keep intimacy with low persons for some time, and then suddenly show grave airs before them, will they leave immediately their old familiar and importunate ways ? So your evil thoughts revert to you and fill you with remorse and shame.

Suggested by sense-perception when evil thoughts rise in your mind, when they inflame passions in you, do not try to put them down by arguments—by trying to convince your mind that it is wrong to cherish such thoughts. Arguments are very weak weapons to combat against passions. Rather divert your mind from all evil thoughts. Try to forget them altogether. Let your heart shake them off as a man would burning clothes. For if you allow your mind to dwell long on them, even though it be convinced of their degrading nature and be honestly attempting to quit them by argument, you may be imperceptibly drawn towards them. Even while busy with arguing on the vile nature of intemperance and lust, a man's mouth waters and the Devil of sexual sin whispers unholy words in his soul. Evil has about it a glamour that human mind finds it hard to resist. So drive out entirely evil thoughts by harbouring holy thoughts.

We often see analogies of physical facts and phenomena in the spiritual world. When a chemist wishes to collect a heavy gas like carbonic acid, he allows the tube from the generating apparatus of that gas to lie at the bottom of a bottle. The heavier carbonic acid slowly displaces the lighter atmospheric air. Two things cannot occupy the same place at the same time,—that cannot be in the order of Nature. When you harbour good thoughts in your heart, evil thoughts cannot remain there any more. If in a hall cultured and respectable men meet together in council, can vagabonds and other base persons enter in there? They may peep in for a while through the doors and windows, but when they see the place occupied by honourable men, they slink away in fear. So if your heart be always full of noble holy thoughts, how can base unholy thoughts find admission there?

Cultivate also the habit of reading good books and deriving instruction and pleasure from them. When we are impressed with the inanity, nay, the evil influence of the company of some men, how we long for books and cry from our hearts, "Books rather than men." Books are not useless bundles of papers as some may think, but are valuable media by which we come in contact with great minds. Through books, they console us in our sorrows, advise us in our hours of temptation, and incite us as if with trumpet-voices to battle against evil, existing in our nature or wherever it may be found. Most men like to court the acquaintance of great personages; why do they not court often the company of the immortals of the earth, who speak their noblest utterances through books? What untold treasure can be found in them! Holy books excite holy thoughts, and when you rise up from their perusal, the momentum of those thoughts continue for a long time and shed their beneficial influence upon your conduct. Holy books give rise in you to new motives, which often, winning victory over your evil motives, lead you to perform good and great deeds. But this happens with those who make the right use of books and do not convert them into instruments for swelling up their self-conceit; who do not gather their knowledge for display and applause, but self-development; who read books to think, live, and act, and not pass for Cyclopædias of information.

Court also the company of living great men; I do not mean of those who are great in the sight of the world on account of their wealth, rank, and renown, though they may be lacking in high morals, but of those who are great by their pure and godly lives. When you come in contact with truly great men, they drag you up imperceptibly to the sphere of thought they live in. Their view-point of life and its duties is far higher than that of ordinary men. All false views of life they have completely abandoned; they have fixed their hearts upon those great moral principles by following which God can be realised. Wealth, honor, and other things that worldly men struggle for may come to them, yet neither do they yearn for, nor get attached to them, when they come, nor grieve over their loss when they pass away. They have passed truly through the centre of indifference and enjoy peace which comes from freedom from dependance on external things and circumstances for happiness. Their hearts find perpetual delight in God. They soar in the high regions of the Spirit, and, like older birds training their young ones to fly, they help you to see the glimpses of those heights. By coming in frequent contact with them, you will grow into their likeness. As by the touch of a magnet, a piece of steel becomes a magnet, so you will become like them by their influence. Your thoughts and sentiments will improve—your head and heart will receive a healthy spiritual tone through purification.

When you have grown holy in your action, holy in your speech, holy in your thought; when no longer your eyes, ears, and other organs play treachery with you; when no longer by bringing in sights, sounds, and other sensations, they cause disturbance; when the turmoil of passions are heard no more in your heart, and the echoes of past memories have died away; then if you sit down and fix your mind upon God, you will feel what sweet contemplative repose comes to it. Have you ever seen a lake in the depth of a calm and cool moon-lit night? How its surface sleeps in the bright light of the moon! Not a ripple stirs its water; like a polished glass it reflects the splendour of the sky; the surrounding objects—the trees on the bank and the hills close by—seem to sympathise with its serenity. There is a solemn hush everywhere, and the spirit of peace broods over the whole scene. Even so, when with a holy mind, you will contemplate on God, your heart will rest in peace in his ineffable Light. Who can describe the bliss of that state? Who can conjecture it unless he has felt a glimpse of it in his life?

Or to use the illustration of our great master, like the photographer's glass plate, cleansed and sensitised with chemicals for exposure to the light of a lovely object, when your heart purged of its impurities and made sensitive by devotion, will shut out all disturbing lights of worldly thoughts and focus itself on God, its Adoration, its Delight, then His image will be imprinted upon it for ever. Seeing the Truth impressed permanently upon it, all illusions together with their mother Nescience will depart to return no more. The dark veil which covered your spiritual sight will be drawn aside, and you will see God—the Infinite Adorable Light in your soul !

Praise be unto God to whom all Praise is due!